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YOUNG: This is our interview with James K. Tanaka at the Japanese American National Museum on April 18, 2014. So, James, given your firsthand experience of living in a labor camp and then your subsequent research of sugar beet labor, I just wanted to dive right into talking about that topic.

TANAKA: All right.

YOUNG: So, from what I understand, your family reported to the Portland Assembly Center on May 5, 1942.

TANAKA: Correct.

YOUNG: And later that month, people were recruited to go to eastern Oregon. Do you know if your father was aware of…

TANAKA: I'm not aware if he knew or not.

YOUNG: Okay. So, in May you're in the assembly center, then by September your family is living in Minidoka.

TANAKA: Correct.

YOUNG: And he went out for the fall…

TANAKA: Harvest.

YOUNG: So can you elaborate on that a little bit?

TANAKA: I don't remember other than that he wasn't there.

YOUNG: And then he came back and they…

TANAKA: They applied for a seasonal group leave, which was granted December 24, 1942. So the following spring, May, when the thinning and blocking of sugar beets took place, we left and went to Twin Falls farm labor camp.

YOUNG: What did that clearance entail?

TANAKA: First, they had to be cleared by the FBI, to make certain they were not on any lists. And then they had to have a job and a place to stay. So, since it's a seasonal, seasonal group, I assume the whole group had a contract with some different farmers to do their fields.

YOUNG: So then in the spring of 1943 you left with your father and your mother to Twin Falls.

TANAKA: Correct.

YOUNG: Why do you think they wanted to participate in seasonal labor, in the work leave?

TANAKA: Before we went to the assembly center, because of the curfew law and not being able to go more than five miles from your home in the daytime, my father was out of work, being a produce buyer and truck driver, driving produce from Portland to San Francisco. So we had no income. So they needed some money to purchase clothes or whatever.

YOUNG: Did you family ever talk about wanting to get away from the barbed wire of Minidoka?

TANAKA: I don't remember any of those conversations.

YOUNG: So can you walk me through what you remember of the camp itself?

TANAKA: The farm labor camp south of Twin Falls was basically a U-shaped road and within that framework, there were the barracks, similar to the relocation center's barracks. Sleeping quarters, pot-bellied stove, beds, table and chairs in the rooms. And then the toilets and washbasins were in buildings between the two sets of, two rows of barracks. And then you had to go to a separate area where the hot water was located, to get showers and wash your clothes and sheets. So that's, the washtubs was located between the men's and women's shower facilities. And then attached to that building was the mess hall and the meeting room, because that's where I went to school.

YOUNG: Did you work in the fields that first year?

TANAKA: I don't remember helping with the thinning and the blocking of the beets, but I might have been out there helping a little bit with the weeding of the fields and the fall harvest of the sugar beets, I probably helped a little bit.

YOUNG: So the family stayed from thinning and blocking in the spring all the way to the fall?

TANAKA: Yes, and then my father got an extension to stay 'til December 3rd, because he had contracted work with Mr. Seaver, living right next to the farm labor camp, so we

were, he, we were able to stay there a little longer. Then we went back to camp and stayed in a different apartment.

YOUNG: Did you have…how old were you when this happened?

TANAKA: Eight, eight years old.

YOUNG: Do you remember having a preference for living in the labor camp or living in Minidoka?

TANAKA: The farm labor camp had total freedom. There were some agricultural fences around, but you could crawl between or under or over them and go pretty much anywhere, because there's not too much limitation, because there's really no restriction as such, except just for anybody, any citizen walking around.

YOUNG: Would you go into town?

TANAKA: Ah, yes. We were able to go into town. My main reason for going into town, other than purchasing clothes, was my Saturday matinee movies for a quarter. Usually a cowboy western, with a short serial, so you'd have to go back next week to see the next part of the serial. Cartoon, and since they didn't have TV in those days, you got to see the world and local, well not local, but national, news on the newsreel. So those were fun times, to go. So I'd either hitchhike or when I got a bicycle, I could ride into town.

YOUNG: So you'd go by yourself? You wouldn't go with friends?

TANAKA: Sometimes, but a lot of times I went by myself.

YOUNG: Did you encounter any discrimination in town?

TANAKA: While I was at the elementary school, Bickel Elementary in Twin Falls, one, I was between, during class time, I guess going to the restroom or office, I passed by an older girl, Caucasian, and she ended up yelling at me and cursing me up one side and down the other. And that was the only real vehement prejudice that I ever got directly. And then when I was in the town, some of the high school kids walked by and jokingly said, "Hi Tojo." And I didn't even wear glasses then. So, that was it.

YOUNG: To go back to school, so you went to school in the town, but before you went to school at the camp?

TANAKA: Yes. I was at Eliot Elementary in Portland, Oregon. Then I went to the assembly center school for a while. And then when I went to Minidoka, I went to Minidoka School for a while. That I remember because I had a mean teacher. She kept those troublemakers, like myself, after class and I was in the third grade class and she

had us memorize Oliver Wendell Holmes stanzas from the poem "The Chambered Nautilus." I don't remember what the stanzas were, but I remember having to stay after school and having to regurgitate those stanzas to her. The camp's school was a one-room schoolhouse, literally, in the meeting room. We had one bench for each grade level, so I was on the third bench. And then finally, in '43, I was finally able to go to public schools and I was able to finally graduate to the fourth grade. But of all the teachers, Mrs. Dreyden is the one, my third grade teacher, that I remember because her class did the winter Christmas program. So I got to be on stage as one of the two narrators, so that was very interesting for me.

YOUNG: How many other students were in the one room schoolhouse?

TANAKA: I don't remember the number, but there were only about three or four us who were in the third grade. So there wasn't a large number because some of the kids were out working, so they didn't go to school.

YOUNG: Was the teacher from Twin Falls, do you think? Or was the teacher someone at the camp?

TANAKA: No, she wasn't from the camp. These were local people.

YOUNG: So when you came to the Twin Falls camp in the spring of 1942, there were other children there? Other families? Not just single men?

TANAKA: You're talking about the farm labor camp?

YOUNG: Yes.

TANAKA: That's in '43.

YOUNG: Oh sorry! '43, yes. When you came in '43 were there children, other than yourself?

TANAKA: Yes there were other families that were there. Because we all ate together, since we weren't cooking individual meals inside the sleeping quarters. There single men and families, so they had a number of people that were there because the camp held, what, two hundred and twenty something people. And there were some, what we called migratory workers, Okies and Arkies, that were living there from the Dust Bowl days and so I made friends with some of them, but not a lot because they were here and then they were gone, type of thing. Whereas we stayed pretty much, especially after '43, we were able to get one of the two-bedroom cottages that surrounded the barrack area on two sides. So that was a more permanent population, so I got to meet, befriend a number of those people.

YOUNG: The Okies and the Arkies you mentioned, did they live in those barracks?

TANAKA: Yeah, they lived in the barracks, because they didn't live in the, except for those few that stayed permanently. I remember one Caucasian family named the Wilsons and as much as the brothers and sisters fought, I sort of said I'm glad I don't have brothers or sisters.

YOUNG: And later there were also Mexican laborers who lived in the camp?

TANAKA: Yes, yeah. That was towards the end of the war and after the war, they had the bracero program, I found out later. So they were coming up and working in the fields with us. I remember some of them were wearing their lightweight jackets in the field, in the summer. I thought that's so strange. I was telling my parents, why are they wearing their jackets when it's so hot. But, I guess I it's the same thing as the middle eastern people out there in the desert, wearing their long, whatever they call those gowns or clothing. Keep all the moisture in I guess.

YOUNG: Do you remember the barracks being segregated at all? Or did everyone live together, so the Mexican laborers would live…

TANAKA: I don't remember if they were segregated or not.

YOUNG: So you mentioned already a little about you lived in the barracks the first year. And the second year?

TANAKA: Possibly. I don't remember fully.

YOUNG: Possibly.

TANAKA: But, eventually we did move into the two-bedroom cottages. And then since we didn't move away from the camp after the war, my dad and I lived 'til October of '49, stayed there that long.

YOUNG: At the camp, there was the schoolhouse that was also sort of a meeting hall.

TANAKA: Correct.

YOUNG: There was, well, what other sorts of facilities were there? Was there a clinic? Or a playground?

TANAKA: There was a clinic, where a nurse was. And a dentist would come in on certain days. And they had the administration office, basically in that same area. And then between the road and the first row of the barracks, there was a grassy field where we used to play baseball on. So that was our sports field, sort of. We didn't play soccer. It was only baseball.

YOUNG: Do you remember a band in the camp? I've seen, I don't know if you've seen them, the Minidoka Irrigator articles about a band that would play and people from the town would come to watch the band.

TANAKA: That was in the Minidoka camp, but not on the farm labor camp.

YOUNG: So your family returned in '44 for the spring blocking and thinning of the sugar beets?

TANAKA: Yes.

YOUNG: And then they stayed for the remainder of the war or did they go back to Minidoka?

TANAKA: We had three different apartment numbers, so I assumed that winter '44 we went back to camp and then the next year we stayed out permanently.

YOUNG: Have you found the documentation of your family for all of this?

TANAKA: Some of them. In 1992, because of the Japanese American National Museum, I was able to get my family name and family number, 16152, sent off to the National Archives and I got a little stack of papers and that gave me some insight as to why I was in Twin Falls County, because we couldn't leave it. The government said, "If you don't get permission from us, you're stuck here." And then in my research, I found that the farmers all wanted military guards to be out in the fields with us so we wouldn't sabotage things or run away or whatever and this was a way that the government did not have to have guards out there, by saying you're restricted to this area, period. And naturally if you're found outside it, then they send you back to the relocation center.

YOUNG: Did you have to carry anything around on your person?

TANAKA: My parents did. I didn't realize it until I saw the paperwork here at the museum, in the exhibit. But, that was the indefinite leave card that permitted you to go, and it stated which area you could go to, and that was the area you were supposed to be in.

YOUNG: Maybe we can talk a little about sugar beets themselves and what they were used for during the war. You and I have talked off camera about the significant contributions Japanese Americans made to the war effort, so could you elaborate on that?

TANAKA: I've read Louis Fiset's article about Japanese Americans during World War II and the sugar beet industry and on the first page he talks about the sugar being used to make synthetic rubber. And then in my research I found that's why Japan attacked Hawaii, to neutralize the Navy so they could take over southeast Asia, getting

petroleum and rubber. And so we lost nine-tenths of our rubber supply, so what are we going to do? Well, the government got the rubber companies in '41, before the war started, to make synthetic rubber, which the Germans had learned how to do after World War I, so they were basically copying their chemical techniques. And they made, what was it, nine thousand tons for the whole year and that's a bit short, because I found out that a battleship requires seventy-five tons of rubber, so we can't build many battleships with only nine thousand tons. But, then I went to the Oregon State website and people had moved from the assembly center to the farms in eastern Oregon to work in sugar beets and that article talks about the sugar being used or actually the alcohol from the sugar, being used to make smokeless explosives. So the use of rubber, synthetic rubber, from the sugar beets was important. I also found that it took several steps to get that rubber made, starting with the alcohol, but petroleum and grain alcohol required more steps, so it was cheaper to use the sugar. And we were fortunate, because in my research I found out that in the thirties they had a sugar beet blight, wiping out a lot of the sugar crop. So had that hit during the war years, we would have really been in trouble, but fortunately, like Idaho I found had like 48,000 acres planted in 1941 and the government said in '42 we're lifting the quota and plant 100,000 acres, but they only planted 85,000 acres, which is still almost double. But where are you going to get the workers? In my research, I found that the government said, "Well, we'll get the people who are moving from the coast, because they are farmers and farm workers and we'll recruit them." I was able to find a couple advertisements, one for Heart Mountain, one for the Twin Falls area, where they're advertising farmers, people that were in the relocation centers to come out and work in the sugar beet industry and then there are a number of photographs that photographers took of workers in the fields. So, we're fortunate that we were able to help. That's one reason they moved us into the intermountain states. Even though the governors, April 7, 1942, said, "We don't want the enemy in our states. We don't want to house them." The people, the state officials that dealt with the sugar beet companies, the sugar beet farmers, said, "We need workers." So that's basically why they moved us into the intermountain states. But, it's not widely advertised.

YOUNG: What made you want to start researching this to begin with?

TANAKA: I was looking at our Common Ground exhibit here in the museum and some of the text panels left questions in my mind as to what caused this to happen or what caused this to happen. I got on a committee, so that people who were not in camp would know about Common Ground and people able to choose items to choose from. So if they chose six items for an hour tour, then basically talking less than ten minutes for each item. And so with that basically thirteen page outline, I said, "Well my kids may want to know about this, so I should start writing about my life, so they know what life was like." And I started and I continued researching and writing and researching and writing and getting so many pages. I said, "How am I going to arrange it?" I finally decided chronological, using an outline form and that way I could supplement anything I found later that would fit in, which I

did. And so three and a half plus years later, over three thousand single page, single-sided copies for my compendium of basically Minidoka and sugar beet industry.

YOUNG: Has it been difficult, trying to find all these documents?

TANAKA: No. Fortunately the museum has the nine volumes of Roger Daniels photocopied government archival papers. And then the Harry Truman museum library website has some information about Dillon Myer letters and speeches that he presented to various groups. And the San Francisco one is the interesting group. He's talking to businessmen there, talking about the Japanese Americans are eventually going to come back to the coast, so how are they going to be received, and it's up to you people to set the tone. So they can come back as the enemy or they could come back as Americans. It's up to you. And then he had a speech that he gave to the Minidoka people before the war was over and telling them that since the camps are going to close, you have the option to try to leave, so you had to fill out forms, naturally. But, if you were released early, before the war's over completely and the camps are completely closed, you'll get an opportunity to get a better job, because once the military people come back, then those jobs are going to be gone and places to stay. And as it was, the government set up, what was it? Trailers, trailer parks, for people to live in. So, because there was such a shortage of housing.

YOUNG: Do feel that, how can we better address this period of the Japanese American wartime experience pertaining to sugar beets? What would you like to see?

TANAKA: An exhibit. Or at least, if not an exhibit, in Common Ground, we have a sugar beet topper and a small text panel saying we met the shortage of workers in agriculture, but it didn't say which area and the importance of it. So at least have it in that section, some information dealing with the importance and how we helped the war effort. Because the government called these camps relocation centers and they wanted us to leave us and so jobs were provided, people were leaving. Eventually, I was reading an article in the local camp newspaper, that thirty-three states had acquired people from camp, of 2,000 or so who had left camp by '44. And so they were relocation centers. That's another issue. Some people say it's a euphemism, being a relocation center, but for the other 100,000 people that didn't leave, that was their choice. But the ones that wanted to leave did go and we stayed out permanently, if possible.

YOUNG: Have you ever met anyone else who was at a labor camp or went out for sugar beet work?

TANAKA: A few since I've volunteered here at the museum. I've come across people, but not a lot.

YOUNG: Have you spoken to your family or the public about your experiences at the labor camp?

TANAKA: To the visitors here at the museum, because I am a tour docent. But, to my family, I haven't really sat down and given them a speech or when they came here, I was able to give them a short speech. But, other than that I have my compendium that I passed on to them, except that it's not updated. I have to add the pages I've added to it since then.

YOUNG: To go back to the camp, and maybe you might not remember, but if you do, could you walk me through, say, an average day in the summer when you weren't going to school, about what you would do at the labor camp?

TANAKA: Well, during the summer we had work, so we'd get up, eat, go to the fields where we had to work. I was involved mostly with weeding, because that's mostly what the summer work is about. You cut out the weeds, then watch the people irrigate, then the weeds would grow and later weeks, month later, you'd go back in the same field and get the new weeds. And then I don't remember which year it was, but it may have been '44 before the war was over or it may have been just after the war, my dad sharecropped with a fellow name Keller and it grew bulb onions, so I had a lot of summer work going through weeding the field, since my parents were busy working somewhere else.

YOUNG: Do you remember or have you come across in your research how much your family would have been paid for sugar beet labor?

TANAKA: They were getting paid $1.40 a ton for harvesting. There was a set hourly rate when you're weeding or when you're out there thinning or blocking. Some of it was piecework, so much per acre. So you'd get paid either way. The harvesting of the beets, because some people could work faster than others, you got paid by the ton. And a typical person might earn under ten dollars a day. And in those days I mentioned I went to the movies for a quarter, so the cost of living was much lower. But, and the problem with working in the fields, they had no port-a-potties. You found a tree or scrub or a ditch that you could use as a restroom. And held true for the women also.

YOUNG: So your mother was out in the fields as well?

TANAKA: Yes.

YOUNG: And then you do recall if your family was part of a work crew and they would get pick up by farmers?

TANAKA: Initially we were at, a whole group, seasonal group leave, so we were contracted to work as a large group. Then later my dad became a crew boss, going out to the

farmers, recruiting jobs for the crew to work on. So we'd go out and work in those fields.

YOUNG: So when you were part of a group, a farmer would come and pick you up early in the morning?

TANAKA: No, we'd go out to the fields.

YOUNG: Yourselves?

TANAKA: Yeah.

YOUNG: They wouldn't come get you. Okay.

TANAKA: But, initially I guess, when we were with the seasonal group leave, they'd come and pick us up. But, later, after we were in camp, for a while we were able to get a vehicle, a motor vehicle that would carry us to the fields.

YOUNG: Do you remember anything about a curfew?

TANAKA: The curfew was before we went to the assembly center. I guess that was plan B. Plan A was voluntarily evacuation and plan B, they didn't want us wandering around at night, planning to damage, since we were supposed to be spies and saboteurs. So 8:00 to 6:00 you were not allowed out and that's when my dad got laid off, because he couldn't drive the truck to San Francisco, so he was out of work.

YOUNG: But you don't recall, a lot of the labor camps had curfews. You couldn't be out past 11:00. But you don't remember that…

TANAKA: I don't remember that because I'm usually asleep by that time.

YOUNG: You mentioned in your research you've come across recruitment advertisements from camp newspapers…

TANAKA: They were flyers they posted in bulletin boards for jobs in the camps, relocation centers. One was Amalgamated Sugar Company that I got ahold of. The other was Holly Sugar Company and that was recruiting mainly for Heart Mountain people. And Minidoka and Amalgamated. And they had several places, farm labor camps that we could go and stay at. But, I found, before they started recruiting us, that the sugar beet companies were in desperate need of workers at the sugar beet company because the increased acreage and the farmers, so Amalgamated Sugar Company said, like, need 3,000 extra workers because of the increased production of sugar beets and something like 1,600 could be Japanese Americans. So they were appealing directly to using us.

YOUNG: And before that happened, before they actually started recruiting, the WRA wanted to put together a work corps.

TANAKA: Yes, and that was, I was listed on WRA-26. That was, when you went to the relocation center, they got your vital statistics and which occupations you probably could go in camp. That's 26. WRA-1 was a work recruiting program, that they wanted to get us to sign and when people ready the details of that contract, they said, "No." And so that program became a total failure. So if you ask the average person that was in camp, "What was WRA-1?" you'll probably get no answer or response because most people haven't heard of it or don't remember, because it was a very short lived program. No body wanted to be separated from their family. If this permitted families to go and stay together, then it might have gotten more response. But, as it turned out people were afraid they would not be able to be with their family, so they said forget it.

YOUNG: And in your research, you've also come across, related to the work corps, the WRA's early efforts to explore labor camps.

TANAKA: Yes. Minidoka director had received a letter dated March 19 and that one asked, "Do we have facilities for this, this, this, and how many people." About two hundred and twenty something people at that particular farm labor camp. And so they had inquired. And I am certain they did that with other farm labor camps around, in the intermountain states.

YOUNG: On March 19 and wasn't the WRA just established the day before?

TANAKA: Yeah.

YOUNG: So that was part of the plan from the beginning?

TANAKA: Yeah. A lot of these, because the government didn't want us sitting around, twiddling our thumbs, so what can we have them do? So they came up with a list and within that list was reclamation of land. And so the acreage we removed the sagebrush and greasewood from, dug irrigation canal to furnish the area with water, eventually after the war I found that Minidoka's farm land was given to people who won the lottery. You put your name in and you got forty acres, to full-length barracks to live in, and six months to try your hand at farming. So today that land is still being farmed, including much of the area where the buildings, the barracks buildings were. So we did reclaim the area. And naturally on the two Indian reservations, the Indians got the land, so they didn't have to develop, it was developed by the Japanese, Japanese Americans.

YOUNG: So when the war ended, your family stayed at the Twin Falls camp.

TANAKA: Yes. And many of the other people started leaving. So one family was the Yamagatas. In Oakland they owned a market, so my dad, somehow, contacted

them and one day a big box of iced tuna showed up at our house and my dad cut it up and delivered it to the people that had ordered parts of the fish. And then one shipment had a big octopus in it, so people got to eat octopus also. And then to get Japanese food after the war, a guy would drive around in his van, selling Japanese food, canned food mostly and dry goods. So we were able to get those types of things.

YOUNG: So in the three to four years you lived there after the war, were there still migrant workers coming and living in the barracks in the summer time?

TANAKA: Yes and Mexicans, through the bracero program.

YOUNG: Were you the only Japanese American family in the camp or were there others?

TANAKA: No, there were a few others, but not many, because as I said many of them started leaving. So we weren't the last ones to leave, but I was talking to a visitor that came to the museum and he said his sister stayed in the area north of Twin Falls. So, apparently she liked the open desert area and the weather, so she stayed.

YOUNG: And did your family stay because was employed and he had lost his job in Portland?

TANAKA: Yeah. And so finally, '49, my dad's former boss, Mr. Watanabe, contacted and said he had a job delivering gasoline to the Nisei farmers, so he went up and delivered it, but he found he could make enough money, so he called his old Mexican crew from Twin Falls to come up and work in the fields. But, we only did that for one year and then he moved down to Los Angeles and I got to stay with my great uncle and aunt in Portland.

YOUNG: And when you were in eastern Oregon, was there a noticeable Japanese American community?

TANAKA: Yes there was. When I went to school, junior high school, there were quite a few students that were Japanese Americans. I got my first crush.

YOUNG: Do you remember her name?

TANAKA: No. I don't remember. But, it was not looks. She could hit the softball, since the boys and the girls had intermural softball for P.E., so she could hit the ball and wow. Made an impression on my young brain.

YOUNG: But, that must have been a nice change to go from some place, they had a community center there…

TANAKA: Yes. We went there and I remember playing bingo, not winning. But my dad, because of his former boss, started a Japanese American American Legion

baseball team. And he was coaching the team the summer I was there. And they, the two smallest boys had the best control of the baseball and they became the pitchers. He taught them how to throw the ball with a drop. And I'm trying to warm them up and I know it's going to be a drop and I still miss it. That's why I wasn't a very good baseball player.

YOUNG: At what point, was it after '92, that you started getting really interested in learning more…

TANAKA: No, it was after I volunteered here at the museum, because like I said I was on a committee and then there's questions raised in Common Ground exhibit about what caused this to happen. So, I started digging, digging, I came across a paragraph in a book and then I found the original text the person had copied from, but he altered it so drastically that there's no way that I could see that he could reach those conclusions that he had in his paragraph. So I said you've got to have original copies, so then I found Roger Daniels' nine volumes and that's sort of really came me a lot of governmental papers.

YOUNG: Have you ever gone back to Twin Falls to try to find…

TANAKA: I went back with my wife and two sons. We went and visited and I got a one-day fishing license. We went to the Richland Canal. We used to go fish there, but initially we fished at the Magic Reservoir, north of Shoshone, which is north of Twin Falls and the Wood River. And those trout were white-meated trout, but when we went to the canal, they were pink, like salmon, and fat because they had lots of food the river did not have. And then in the fall, they close the canal down because they don't need the irrigation water and my dad would drive up there and go fishing. And he knew somebody that had a freezer down in Shoshone and so he would take the trout there, freeze, and then bring all the trout and everything up to or down to L.A. and give it away to his friends, to share that fat trout. Since it had a lot of fat in it, it was tasty.

YOUNG: Did you go back to the labor camp? Did you find former home?

TANAKA: No, I never went back to the labor camp, because as far as I knew, they only had a marker there, as a monument to mark the site.

YOUNG: But, since then, you've done, you've looked online and found the camp is still standing. The labor camp, not Minidoka.

TANAKA: Oh yes. I was able to get a Map Quest satellite view of it. And then I got one later that was in color, to see the green trees still there.

YOUNG: Is there, I've asked a lot of the questions I wanted answered, is there something I've left out? Is there some aspect of your research maybe we haven't discussed that…

TANAKA: Well, I've, one of the, used to be staff member here, in the resource center, was doing research on the enemy alien program, so I started digging into and found some bits of information about that, why the Germans and the Italians and the Japanese were rounded up, under what authority, presidential proclamation. So they were separate from Executive Order 9066. So I started getting on a little bandwagon, saying internment was not us, that was the enemy aliens, the Japanese nationals, the German nationals, the Italian nationals. So I come up with a list, a little two-column sheet separating and then I went to page four and read that the governors' conference, they had initially said that internment is not evacuation. Interment was the removal of the enemy aliens and evacuation was removal of people from a secure zone, which was basically the West Coast and southern Arizona and we were not allowed to be there. But, that's a totally different program and people will lump them all together, even the L.A. Times Style Department says there's no difference between the two groups. And yet, I was able to find about eight different items that separate the two groups.

YOUNG: And you also have strong opinions about the use of relocation centers. We've talked about that a little bit today. Could you elaborate on that a little bit, the use of labor camps as a way of relocating people?

TANAKA: Yes. Once the call went out for sugar beet workers, people were leaving the camps, not as many as the government want. Their program for relocation, that's why they called them relocation centers, was true. As I've gone through some of my old papers, it all points to the government planning to get us out and this was because they couldn't move all 110,000 of us at one time and have us relocate because there weren't enough places for us to go, so they built the structures. And then from there, as we could find jobs and living quarters, then they moved us to those particular areas. But, not a lot of the people, because you're talking about 10,000 people by '44, so out of 110,000, so it's not even ten percent.

YOUNG: Of who had left the camps permanently?

TANAKA: At least during the summers. Because if they were in agriculture, they had to go back. But, I did find a photograph in the prints and photographs, prints and photographs of my cousin and he was with another Japanese American in a plating company in Cleveland, Ohio, initially, after, when the war first started. So there were people who had gone to places for more permanent type of labor. And then the Irrigator listed various jobs and how much you could earn, what the typical pay was. Because if you're going to leave, you needed to know what to expect, so they were printing different areas and jobs, their hourly wages.

YOUNG: So it seems that the, specifically the sugar beets, there was multiple reasons why the WRA wanted that program to happen – because they needed the labor and they wanted people to relocate away from the coast.

TANAKA: Yes.

YOUNG: And have you seen anything in your research about what motivated people to leave the camps to go to the labor camps, even if it was just for a summer?

TANAKA: A family of four could earn much more money than they could working for a small amount in the center, in the relocation centers. There was a big argument about how much people should be paid for labor within the relocation center and then they finally that they should get less than a private, because they were getting free room and board, just like the military people and the private was getting paid twenty-one dollars a month and the professionals got paid nineteen, the skilled laborers got sixteen, and the unskilled got twelve dollars a month, plus a small two or three dollar clothing allowance. So if you went out and earned eight dollars and forty cents in one day during the harvest season, it wouldn't take too many days to earn more than you could by staying in camp. And then a few people had money to begin with and so what they did, like many Asians today, they pooled their money and bid on it and whoever was willing to pay the highest interest gets the money to start or spend. So they developed canteens, where you could go and buy small items and then the profits were given to the members in that group. And then if you wanted more expensive items, then the big three helped, Sears Roebuck catalogs, Montgomery Ward catalogs, and J. C. Penney catalogs, so if you had the money, you could order that way.

YOUNG: This was in Twin Falls or this was in Minidoka?

TANAKA: Any of the camps. Since you didn't get a day to go into town with the other people, this was one way you could get outside things into the relocation centers.

YOUNG: When you were in Twin Falls, do you remember times when all three members of your family would go into town, to go into a restaurant or…

TANAKA: Mostly I went with my mom to shop for clothes, shoes. The shoes part, because they had the old type fluoroscope, you put your feet inside and you could see the shoes, how your feet are fitting in the shoes, rather than you deciding okay that fits okay or not. And then you could get the right fit, supposedly. Of course, now they've found that radiation is not good for you. So it didn't last forever.

YOUNG: Were you shocked at the difference in climate when you went from Oregon to Idaho?

TANAKA: Not really. It was a little hotter during the summer, but the winters were about the same, so we were dressed for cold climate and of course when you woke up in the morning in the winter, nobody got up in the middle of the night to add more coal to the stove, so it was cold. So you want to stay in bed.

YOUNG: Anything else that you want to talk about related to Twin Falls? I'm assuming you didn't know any of the staff or remember any of the staff.

TANAKA: No. A few of the kids I was in school with from the third grade, I took photographs of them, so I was able to sort of remember their names. And then I wondered who was still around and so I went on the internet and this one lady said, "I think Kenny Boyd might be my father," so she gave me his email address and we communicated back and forth. And the person in charge of the '53 alumni association has sent me letters and little clippings about Minidoka and what they're doing to it. When my high school class had its fiftieth reunion here in Los Angeles, I said, "Gee, if I stayed with this group of people then they, I would have been in the class of '53 in Twin Falls." And so it dawned on me that I should thank them. So I ended up getting the address to the local newspaper from Kenny and they said, I wanted to place personal ad and they said it's cheaper if you buy an ad elsewhere in the newspaper, so they said so much for so many inches, so I plotted out what I was going to say. Basically, I thanked them for treating me the way they did. They accepted me just like any other kid. Forget that I'm of Japanese ancestry. I'm American kid just like they were and they made me feel that way. And I realized after, the girl who went to the all white school in the South, how she must have felt and I don't know if I could have survived as she did, being totally isolated from your classmates. So I was very appreciative of that treatment.

YOUNG: You took photos of the third grade class…

TANAKA: Some class members…

YOUNG: While you were at the public school in Twin Falls or…

TANAKA: Yes. And now the museum has those and they're in their archives.

YOUNG: Did you take photos inside the camp too?

TANAKA: No, because I didn't have a camera then.

YOUNG: You didn't have the camera at the Twin Falls camp?

TANAKA: At the farm labor camp, yes. But, not inside the relocation center.

YOUNG: Right, because you weren't allowed. You'd have to hide it. But, does the archive here have photographs of the Twin Falls labor camp that you took?

TANAKA: There were, I took some at the school and I took a few at the camp that survived. They have those pictures. But, there's not many. One shows my friend Tommy, shows my dog, shows Moony Omakauchi on his bicycle that he used to deliver newspapers.

YOUNG: So you must have purchased a camera at some point while living in the Twin Falls labor camp and then you would just take pictures of your friends. And then you came across those a few years ago? Or you knew you had them?

TANAKA: I knew I had them. I had them in my little box with snapshots that I kept.

YOUNG: But all the documentation came when you requested it from the National Archives later on? Your parents didn't hold on contracts…

TANAKA: That was all, when they were in camp, the paperwork they generated, the archives had that.

YOUNG: I'll have to talk to Maggie to see if I can see those photos. I would love to see them. I don't have anything else, unless you do.

TANAKA: We covered relocation, we covered sugar beets, covered internment, evacuation. Those are my four main topics.

YOUNG: I think this is wonderful; I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me and share your research.

TANAKA: I'm glad you gave me this opportunity. Thanks to the Pacific Citizen newspaper, otherwise I would have never found out about your research.

YOUNG: Hopefully you will be happy with what I put together when it comes here in a couple years. Thanks again and we can wrap up.

END OF INTERVIEW

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