

NARRATOR: Marilyn Takahashi Fordney
INTERVIEWER: Evelyn Taylor
DATE: October 30, 2003

ET: Today is October 30, 2003. This interview, oral history, is with Marilyn Fordney, F-o-r-d-n-e-y, who along with her mother, father, younger sister, and brother stayed at Boys Town during the Japanese-American Internment Period. This is tape one. So Marilyn, tell me a little bit—a bit about your grandparents. They were the first of your generation to come over to the United States.

MF: Yes, that's correct. My grandfather's name was Morikiyo Thomas Uchiyamada [born October 7, 1884], and he came from the Miyazaki Prefecture, on the island of Kyushu, Takanabe, Japan.

ET: Could you spell his last name please?

MF: It's M—it's U-c-h-i-y-a-m-a-d-a, but, it had many syllables, and one thing I would like to explain about the Japanese names is that many syllables, like, for instance, six syllable names like this or five syllable names — they are totally going into extinction. Today, you may see people with maybe two or three syllable names.

ET: Now why is this?

MF: Or four syllable names, um, it's because in those days, the names that were given were quite lengthy and as the more modern names have been evolving and the families have died out from those old names, then, the names slowly fade into oblivion and are no longer.

ET: So, this is in Japan or in America that this is happening?

MF: It's in Japan, but it's also affecting those in America, because we are a descendent of that name and slowly, our family is fading out to the point where there will no longer be any of those Uchiyamadas left.

ET: Now, is this because there aren't any members of the family or is it because they're shortening the name?

MF: The families get less and less in number and slowly they're dying out to the point, where there is no more—no longer—no longer a generation to carry the name.

ET: And, that is in Japan as well?

MF: Yes, yes, it's both. And-uh, he came here as a—

ET: This is your grandfather.

MF: My grandfather came here as a student who graduated as an electrical engineer and he was looking after his graduation for a position here, but at that time in America, you could not get hired when you were Japanese, and it was very difficult to find a job. During this time, he would go to a railroad station. I am not exactly sure whether it was up in San Francisco area, but it could have been. And, he met my grandmother who had come from Westport Town, County Mayo, Ireland and her name was Mary Celia O'Brien [born December 7, 1878]. He would go there and have something to eat at the station and she worked there as a Harvey Girl. Now in the early days of the railroad, the Harvey Girls worked in the railroad station serving sandwiches and coffee and tea and meals and people that were travelers would go through that station. And so, that's where a lot of people congregated.

ET: Well, where did they get the name Harvey Girl?

MF: I'm not exactly sure how that came about. I am not sure whether it came about from the person who was hiring them and made that, you know—and they wore special uniforms. In fact, an MGM musical film was made in 1946 called "The Harvey Girls," I think, several movie stars were in it, and they wore blue and white, uh, like, a blue dress with a little white apron type of thing. And, I remember seeing it and realizing that those were called Harvey Girls, not realizing at that time that my grandmother was a Harvey Girl. (laughs) [Note: Researched further Fred Harvey's famous Harvey House waitresses became the focus of a novel by Samuel Adams entitled *The Harvey Girls* published in 1942]

ET: You know, I'm wondering if this was nationwide or was this only regional? This is interesting. Have you ever read about it or heard about it?

MF: No, I've never really known whether it was only in California or not. I'm not sure.

ET: Interesting, now when did you—when did she work there?

MF: Oh, my gosh, this would have been back in the 1900s.

ET: My goodness, okay.

MF: Yeah, 1900. [Note: Mary Celia O'Brien came to the United States in 1903].

ET: Okay, let me ask you a question. I might have missed it. Why did your grandfather—do you know why your grandfather decided to come over to America? Was it for—so he—

MF: He was—uh, yeah, —I'm not sure exactly. I think he was a second son, and so he was not entitled to get the property in Japan as a first son. So, he needed to make his way on his own and I think that he left from a prominent well-to-do family. I'm not too familiar with the whole setup of that family, but I do know that it would be kind of rare for the eldest son to pick up and leave, you know, if you were in second like he was. So, as far

as for the fact of what the reason was, I am just speculating at that, because I'm not absolutely sure and my mother never really mentioned it. I don't even know if she knew.

ET: Did he have any particular skills that he brought with him?

MF: Well, he was a very bright person and he was an inventor. And, he would design things that were quite sophisticated. In fact, there were people that had just took advantage of his inventions; so, he would make things and then, they would kind of take over the thing. And, the next thing he knew, it was just out of there, just sold and gone and somebody had taken his idea, and he was just kind of vulnerable to that. So, I mean he was very creative. As I say, he had this engineering mind, the development—my mother said she remembered him with cogwheels and odd drawings that she saw him doing. Unfortunately, nothing was a success for him, because they were very cruel to him. I mean with five children—

ET: Your mother—your mother's family or your mother's father's family.

MF: My—my—

ET: Just your parents?

MF: —my mother, when she was little, and being in that environment—

ET: Okay.

MF: —where she was the one that said that they were doing it for—so she knew her father, who is my grandfather, was an inventor, but she said he wasn't successful. He had a job once in a while as an electrical engineer, but he only got the job, when someone was on a holiday, was ill or on vacation, then, he would do the fill-in. And so, they would travel from one place to another, because they'd have to move the whole family to that location to work there. They didn't have transportation like we have today, where you could just

get in a car and go off, you know, to a job, without leaving the whole family to do it. So, they constantly moved around and things like that.

ET: This is your grandfather. Now how did your grandfather meet your grandmother?

MF: All right, they met in the railroad station as the Harvey Girl.

ET: Okay.

MF: Remember, she was—

ET: And, what was he doing there?

MF: What had happened was, he was probably having coffee or tea or something to eat, and he would go in there on a routine basis. So obviously, he was going on that train to other places and what happened was she got ill. And, he didn't see her one time, so he worried about her. And, he asked one of the other workers, where was she? And, they said, Oh, she's ill and she can't come. So, he asked where she was located and found her and nursed her back to health, so, he fell in love with her and they got married.

ET: And, what was your grandmother's name?

MF: Uh, Mary, uh—um, her name was Mary Celia O'Brien.

ET: Mary Celia O'Brien and now so, apparently, your grandfather was still acquiring some English. He was educated somewhere.

MF: Yeah, but I have no idea exactly where he was educated, but to learn English, I don't know.

ET: Do you have any idea about when they were married?

MF: Um, not exactly, I'm not sure, because we don't have any documents. Everything is gone.

ET: Maybe a couple, three years after all of this took place, early 1900's maybe.

MF: It would be early 1900's— [Note: Marriage took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico on January 7, 1906]

ET: Okay.

MF: —because my mother was not the eldest of the children, and she was born in 1915.

ET: Okay.

MF: So, I am sure that it was in the early 1900's.

ET: So now, uh, now your grandmother you indicated, uh, was obviously, Irish—

MF: She was only Irish, yeah.

ET: Did she ever, uh—was there any discussion about her family back in Ireland? Did she have any family here?

MF: She had—what happened is during—you have to kind of skip time in order to find that out. The reason why is because my grandfather and grandmother were so poor and hadn't much income coming in and they then started to raise children; there were eventually five children. The youngest—the eldest one [Teddy] died at about a young age, maybe one or one and a half years or maybe two years at the most, died of a childhood illness of some kind. We don't know exactly. And, they knew with four children, traveling from one place to another to work, and not having much income, that they got to a point where the mother decided to—which was my grandmother—decided to maybe not live in a house and then, get a tent. And then, they would be in the tent. That way they could save rent. So, they went to live in a tent and they got into this tent with very little—and they made friends with some people that were near enough around who actually, some of them, took advantage of these poor people. It was kind of a shame, but that's what—the way they lived. People would prey on others and that's what

happened. Eventually, though, in order to find out more about my grandmother's background, you have to jump years, because what happened was she died of breast cancer that metastasized to the uterus, but because they didn't go to doctors, by the time they sought medical help, it was already too late. My grandfather, being that he was very distraught, he started to drink and my mother would never admit that he was an alcoholic, but actually, that's what happened. He became an alcoholic. She kept telling us that he died of a stroke, but that wasn't really true. Later on, when we found out what he really died of, of course, it was really a tragedy because he was in a facility to dry out. And, the eldest, that is my Aunt Hannah, would go there to visit him. The children at that time, were all placed in an orphanage with the understanding that when my grandfather got out and was dried out, whatever, they would then be able to get out of the orphanage with him, live with him. Well, what happened is he died, and they were then total orphans, real orphans. And, because the rules were so great, and they were living in such precarious places all of the time, different places, they lost so much of their belongings, that there are no photographs. There was very little that they ever found at all, and then, when we were interned during the war years, it was really lost. We lost the family things. It was only after the war that my mother decided she wanted to find out more about her mom and see if she could get even one photograph, so she wrote to a postmistress in Ireland, and this postmistress turned out to be exceedingly generous. She kind of befriended my mom by long distance. They began letters and started to research where our family members were. We discovered that we had Scottish family—other cousins in both Ireland and England and in Chicago and in Colorado. So, we have relatives all over, scattered, that we didn't even know about, but it was only after the war, so it was

probably in the fifties that we started discovering these relatives. Some of the relatives were very receptive and immediately took transportation to come to see us and long distances, so it was kind of a little eye-opening experience for us.

ET: Now, when we go back to your grandfather, he basically was sort of a Jack of all trades, basically. And now, your mother—

MF: Well okay, really, an engineer—

ET: Okay.

MF: —an engineer, and then he was very—yeah, he had—they had a very—like a very focused—more like a tunnel vision. Their minds work a certain precise way. Being that he was an inventor, he had this very precision type way of thinking, but yet, he was very creative. I think that sensitivity, when you're a creative person, you're extremely sensitive, and I think that that probably is where he met his demise, because when you are that creative and you come up with genius ideas, your sensitivity is more acute than other people, and you tend to take things that happen in life much more severely and strongly, especially into your subconscious. And, of course, that's probably what made him ill.

ET: Yeah, maybe it was the beginning of the process. Now your grandmother and grandfather had how many children?

MF: They had five children, the eldest, Teddy, died at about one and a half years or two years of a childhood illness.

ET: Okay.

MF: And then, they had my Aunt Hannah who married a French person [Arthur Gildea], actually. He was different nationalities, maybe two things, and then, my Uncle Ambrose Uchiyamada who married a Jewish woman [Hilda Kastelowitz] and that Jewish woman

was a physicist who worked on the first atom bomb that was developed here in America that flew over to Japan and annihilated both in Hiroshima and in Nagasaki.

ET: Oh, my goodness. Do you know her name?

MF: Her name was Hilda. I don't know the maiden name, but, she married my Uncle Ambrose, so her married name was Uchiyamada. [Note: Hilda's maiden name was Kastelowitz] And, they settled on the east coast of America, but she originally worked in Chicago, and they worked at a university, and they lived in a place where they developed the first atom bomb.

ET: Wow! So now, now you mentioned that your grandmother passed away, from cancer. Do you happen to know approximately when that was?

MF: Um, I'm not exactly sure. I think—okay, she died January 20, 1927 and she was born December 7, 1878. There is some discrepancy about her age, because she declared that she was an 1884 birth, but, we discovered later that it was a mistake, birth date, because she always wanted to be younger than my grandfather. But, in reality I think she was older than he.

ET: By how many years?

MF: Um, let's see—

ET: Maybe a couple?

MF: You know, I am not sure what his birth date is; no, I'm not sure.

ET: So your grandmother passed away, and the brothers and sisters were placed in an orphanage, and your father—and your grandfather, uh—

MF: Oh, and one more thing—

ET: Okay.

MF: —we think they were married in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on January 7, 1908 and the reason why is because in California, there was a law against marriages of mixed races, so they had to go to another state to get married.

ET: Okay and then they came back to California.

MF: They came back to California, and the first child was born, uh, Theodore, but they nicknamed him Teddy and his birth date was September 1, 1909. He died six months later in March of 1910 of diphtheria.

ET: Okay.

MF: And then, my Aunt Hannah was born August 15, 1911. Ambrose was the next one, which was the one married to Hilda, the physicist. He was born on March 21, 1913 and my mother was born on July 28, 1915. And, my youngest, Uncle Raymond who they nicknamed "Jackie," was born on September 12, 1922. But, my mother was the only one of the children born in Japan. What happened is, after all the children were born, she went to—or the first—let's say the first three children were born. The parents decided maybe they would go back to Japan to see if there was a possibility that he could get work there. So, they scraped together what savings they had and they got on a ship and went back. And, when they got there, they realized that the relatives were extremely upset with the fact that he was married to someone that was of a different nationality. And, they actually had built him a house, we understood and he went to the house and because they made such a big to-do about it, he was so upset by it, he tore off the door, we were told. And, because the— children were then—they used a special Japanese word that—when you were in Japan—where if you were born with mixed blood, they would call you “round eyes” [happa] in Japanese. And so, the children were teased and

taunted like that, so because he couldn't get work or anything they eventually came back to America. And, it was during the time they were in Japan is when they had my mother and that was on July 28, 1915. When they came back, my Uncle Raymond was born September 12, 1922. He was an American citizen, so then, my mother is the only one that was not a citizen of the United States.

ET: Your mother's name was—

MF: Margaret [Her sister Hannah called her "Lily" for many years].

ET: So when they came back—where did they come back to live— when they came back from Japan?

MF: It's possible that at that time they decided that the tent they were going to be in, it was all ready to go, because my mother remembers the tent. And, it was—she drew the tent for me. She drew a picture of it. She talked about many things and wrote it down for me about what happened, her experiences when they lived in a tent, because they had no running water or any electricity. And, they were living out just like a street person would. I mean they were living in a tent, and it was a fairly large tent, because they could all live there, but, you can imagine it must have been cold during the winter months. And, it was very unpleasant, uh, for living quarters especially for children. It would have been cold.

ET: And, they—did they move after that around Northern and Southern California, or did (inaudible)_____.

MF: I think it was most—I think it was mostly in the southern part, but I am not absolutely certain of that. But, I think it was mostly in the southern part. So, I think if they went—the first one might have been to Fresno, something like that.

ET: Okay, but not really all the way up.

MF: No.

ET: Now—then, the children were then taken into orphanage. Oh, you had mentioned that, there were some people that had taken advantage of your grandfather. How did—in what ways did they do that? (inaudible)_____.

MF: Well, he would make friends with people thinking they would help him with his inventions, and the next thing you know, is they'd be gone.

ET: They were taking it.

MF: Yeah.

ET: They were taking credit for it.

MF: There was something about that, that we heard that—

ET: That's too bad.

MF: —but nothing material, like, we would know, well, what happened, you know.

ET: Okay, okay.

MF: So, we don't know all of the story, but we see on the back (inaudible)_____.

ET: Did they ever mention, other than the issue with California, not allowing mixed race marriages, did they ever—did your mother ever remember there being the fact that one person who said they were different races, did any of the kids remember it being a problem? Any incidents happen that stick in—stuck in her mind which she related to you?

MF: My mother was more happy-go-lucky generally, so the things didn't seem to be,—it was very positive thinking, so that it didn't make an impact with her as much.

ET: And, it may not have been going on at that time, either.

MF: Well—

ET: There may not have been so much going on.

MF: —there was. It was a lot, because you couldn't—an Asian person could not even hold a job. You couldn't get a secretarial position, for instance. You couldn't go (inaudible)_____. If you were Asian, you were restricted. You could go and work as a maid in a house with a family, maybe do some ironing, laundry, you know, I mean it was you just couldn't get an office job, like a blue collar job or in an office. You just couldn't.

ET: Okay.

MF: You had to work a mediocre type position and even my Aunt Hannah, when she was going to get married, because she also married of a different race, she had to go to another state, also. She did not marry in this state. And, that happened, let's see—by the time the war hit, I would say she was married and, so that would have been just before the war that she got married. It would have been some years just before the war. And so, there was not—and it was difficult to become a citizen. Like, my mother couldn't just go and become a citizen, so she was the only child that was not. But yet, my father—the person she married—my father was born in this country. He was an American citizen.

ET: Did your mother ever become an official U.S. citizen?

MF: Yes, she did, only after the war.

ET: After the war, okay.

MF: But, war made a big difference, and part of it was better jobs, and you could become a citizen and there were other things that occurred inside of the war that lightened up on the Japanese-Americans.

ET: Now, your grandmother passed away. Did your mother ever relay to you any personal memories or experiences about your grandmother that you remember that, you know, touched your heart?

MF: Well, she did relay how she got the cancer. She said she was working and she was sweeping with a broom and the broom handle hit her breast, and I guess it caused, like, a lump or something. And, it must have been a period of time that passed, and then, eventually she started to complain. But, she doesn't remember going to the doctor until the very end, and by that time it was too late. But when they lived in the tent, one of the things that did occur there, which I found really, like, someone taking advantage of the situation, was when my Aunt Hannah was just a young girl. And, it was with the lady that lived in a house not too far from them. There was, I think a particular place that gave out free turkeys to each family—I guess, like, people that are homeless or people that don't have much—so she decided to have my aunt go with her. So, she asked permission to take her along and they walked downtown to get this turkey, free turkey. When they got there, it was for two families, you see. Hannah would be getting hers—you get one per family, and this other lady couldn't get two, so she put the child in line so she could have her get a turkey, also. Then, when they got back towards the place where they were living and they were walking toward the tent and towards the place where that lady was living, the lady said, "Oh, give me the turkey." And, the child, who was my aunt, gave her the turkey, and she turned and the lady gave her ten cents. And, she walked off with the two turkeys. So, she just used my aunt.

ET: That was very cruel.

MF: Yeah, because my aunt also was staying—living at home and saying why don't we have anything to eat?

ET: Very cruel.

MF: That really shocked me that somebody would do that and at that time—

ET: She took advantage of her heart.

MF: —and took advantage of a child and also a family of homeless, really, basically homeless. I found that really earth shaking, but, there were a lot of things, I guess, that happened to people. And, they were very—it was like all for yourself, not to help anybody else, just for yourself.

ET: Well, so then your—so your grandmother had cancer.

MF: She passed away.

ET: And, your grandfather eventually passed on as well.

MF: Yeah.

ET: And, so now the children were left at an orphanage.

MF: Yeah.

ET: How—what—through that did they adopt out eventually all of them or was everybody adopted or—

MF: None of the children were adopted. The orphanage was a very rural orphanage that was in Boyle Heights area in East Los Angeles.

ET: California.

MF: —yeah, Boyle Heights, California, and it was run by the Maryknoll sisters that are missionaries and they've got missions in different parts of the world. They had a lot of children there that were of mixed parentage. I don't know whether the parents couldn't

take them—continue to take them, whether they died off. I don't know. I am not exactly sure. People did die a lot younger then and of course, it then seemed like a big family there. And, those orphans, to my knowledge, most of them stayed as families there in that orphanage together because, after the war years when I met all the others after I had grown up, they were all kids that were—they said, Oh, we treated it like a family and we became like a big family. And, it continued for many—I mean definitely, if you had a family gathering, you invited all—many of the orphans, or went to the beach, a beach trip meant you would have gotten any of those that were grown up at the orphanage as their family. So, we became quite friendly with them through the years. And so, I know some of the children of many of those orphans from Maryknoll as well.

ET: That's amazing.

MF: Well, mother's marriage in that—from that orphanage was the first marriage.

ET: Okay.

MF: And, what happened is that she married someone who was born in this country, but was pure Japanese. Both of his parents came from Japan and he had a father that had tuberculosis, so that at the age of fifteen, he had to take over the family business, which was a shoe repair business and a shoemaking business. And, he made shoes. And then, he met my mother and eventually they married.

ET: How did he meet her?

MF: I believe he met her at a dance and he took her to the zoo on the first date.

ET: Was your mother still at the orphanage, or had she left?

MF: She was—I believe she's still at the orphanage, and she was going to a high school, which eventually was the same high school I went to.

ET: Which one was that?

MF: That was—at the time it was Bishop Conaty Memorial High School, which now has a different name [Bishop Conaty-Our Lady of Loretto High School].

ET: In Boyle Heights?

MF: No, it was on Pico near Western in Los Angeles.

ET: Okay.

MF: And, they had a dance and he met her at this dance. I don't know exactly where the dance was or who sponsored the dance, but, then they decided to date. And, eventually, they married and their marriage was filmed on 16 millimeter film, which I put onto a videotape for my father later in more recent years and that film was sent to all of the missions around the world, so that they could see the first orphan that was married from that orphanage. So, it was rather interesting, because you could see the dress that she wore, the veil, and it was a Catholic wedding, because it was held in the Maryknoll Church over on Hewitt Street in Los Angeles. And-there's just a lot of things that you can see, the dark wood of the orphanage was in the film, the staircase as she is coming—is being clothed, and they posed on the staircase for their wedding photos, the table that is set for the wedding party as at the reception dinner, you know, kind of where the couples all sit down at, and then, just a wedding cake with a little dove nest on top, I mean just a lot of things that, you know, go back in time between—they're different now. And, to see that then the way it was done — is very moving to see that and the way the men dressed. They had a different way of dressing with the lapels and different—and just my father's hair was different, you know, just so different the way that they looked. And, of

course, the bridesmaids, the way they were dressed, so it's very interesting to see. [Photo #1 wedding of Toshio James Takahashi to Margaret O'Brien Uchiyamada]

ET: What year was this?

MF: This would have been nineteen—I think—35 or '34.

ET: Okay.

MF: So, it was in the mid-thirties, really—

ET: So now, they were married, and where did they go from there?

MF: My father then became a produce person. He worked in a market—

ET: Why didn't he continue on with the shoe business?

MF: Well, —besides the shoe business, what happened is, eventually they gave up that shoe business. I don't know the reasons why, because I would assume that there was still a little bit of business at that time. People still did have handmade shoes and shoes repaired. I don't know. No one ever asked him and I never really inquired about it. Around the house, I would see those—the metal pieces where you would put the shoe on to work on it. We did have some of those. I don't know where he even got those, but he had them. (laughs) His mother was in the hotel business and she remarried another person after my grandfather died, that was my dad's father, and she was a picture bride here and had married my first grandfather, picture bride.

ET: Now what's a picture bride?

MF: A picture bride is — they sent pictures to the young men here, that wanted to marry someone and bring them over from Japan, so that if the person liked that from the picture, they would then send for that person, marry them, and then, establish the family beginnings here.

ET: This was your mother-in-law.

MF: This was my mother's mother-in-law.

ET: Your mother's mother-in-law, excuse me, yes, your mother's mother-in-law.

MF: And, that was Taiko "Tai" Fujita who was my dad's mom—

ET: How was that spelled?

MF: Uh, it would be F-u-j-i-t-a.

ET: Okay.

MF: And then, she married a Takahashi, which was my maiden name, T-a-k-a-h-a-s-h-i, and then when he died, when my grandfather—real grandfather—died, she remarried. And, she remarried a George Fujita, the same last name.

ET: But, he was not related.

MF: No, he was not related, but, by that time they were in the hotel business. And, they ran a hotel called the Brownstone Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles that was almost like a flop house in a sense, where you only paid a very small amount of money to stay there per night. And, then she would do all the cleaning and changing linens and just all kinds of things like that. And then, when the war hit—

ET: World War—

MF: —World War II—my grandfather was accused, which would be my step-grandfather.

My step-grandfather was accused that because Japanese people frequented that hotel that could have been from Japan, travelers, that they thought he could be a spy. So, they threw him into a men's jail/prison camp for the duration of the war. I didn't find that out until after I grew up and asked about him. Where was he? Why didn't he come with us?

Where was he in the camp? I never saw him. Those are things that you just don't think about when you're—you know, you're little. You don't have a need to ask the question.

ET: Now did they ever find any proof of this?

MF: No, no, there was absolutely no proof, and it was, real ridiculous. He was just a person who ran a hotel with my grandmother.

ET: Right, right, now did they—when World War II came, did they—they owned this hotel, correct, or were they just sort of, like, supervising it?

MF: Uh, no, I think they were just supervising it because they—you couldn't—if you were from Japan, you could not buy anything that was land. Now if you had an older son, it's possible that he was an American citizen, then the name of the land or the property could be put in that child's name.

ET: Okay.

MF: But, you could not if you were from Japan.

ET: They had to be the, uh, first generation here.

MF: Uh-huh., right.

ET: So now he was—so he was thrown into jail. Was that in Los Angeles?

MF: I don't know where the jail was.

ET: Okay, now what happened with—backing it up, backing up just a little bit, what happened to your mother's brothers and sisters, after the orphanage?

MF: My Aunt Hannah never really stayed at the orphanage, because she was at the age of fifteen. At the age of fifteen, she started to go off to work in homes doing cleaning and laundry and whatever was needed. She continued her schooling outside, so that way then she continued to be more independent. I don't know where she lived. She may have

lived with the families that hired her, because she was just a young person. She'd come back and forth to visit her brothers and sister and she would go to the hospital then to visit her father, until he died. And, then she also enrolled in the Bishop Conaty Memorial High School and went there to school and finished, graduated, then from that school. My mother also went to the school and graduated in 1934 and then, it was right after that, that she got married.

ET: And do you know what happened to your mother's other, siblings?

MF: Uncle Ambrose went back to Chicago to live. He was considered like, a genius. He was very, very bright. He had a charisma with people that when he went anywhere, people would follow him around. He was also an actor. He loved to do things that had to do with acting. They would visit different kinds of shows; if there was a magic show, and he would volunteer to go up on stage and have his head cut off and things like that. He was very much of a person that was theater oriented and had this charisma with people, so they thought that he would really do something well with his life. When he went back to Chicago, he married this Hilda and started to, um, work. He went to school, finished the university, and started to teach at one of the universities there. He also eventually worked at *Time Magazine* and also Hilda was working, while they were in Chicago at the time, too. So, he had some writing positions. He had some different jobs, and he had teaching positions at universities. So, he was successful, but he always had this tremendous problem with Catholicism. He lived with a very famous Jewish — I mean a Jesuit priest in New York for a while — and I don't recall the name of the priest, but, he was one that had a radio show. And, he was on the news and on the radio and he had a very high profile at that time. And, after that my uncle — when he left that situation and

went on to finish school and went to, you know, get his job and all that — he had this tremendous problem with Catholicism and broke away from the Church. At one time, he was very, very close to the Church, and then he just broke away and then, questioned anything about the church, to such a degree that it was almost uncomfortable to be around him, when we discussed these matters.

ET: What exactly happened? Was he maybe—

MF: Uh, I don't really know. He did—because he was such a genius, he would do things that were very unusual. For instance, he decided to, for a while, become a hobo, because he wanted to write a book and he wanted to live the life of a hobo and meet these people. So, he started traveling the railroad line and he wrote this book and he sent it into many publishers and he was rejected every time. And, the book I did see, because I saw it on his shelf there at his home in Connecticut, when I went to visit one year. And, I would have loved to have read that book, because I am sure his experiences with the hobos would quite enlighten and would tell you a lot about the hobos of that era.

ET: So, it was published eventually.

MF: It was never published.

ET: It was never published.

MF: And, he—

ET: He self published it.

MF: —he self-published, made it up into his own little book and he went from New York all the way to California and back, and that's when he wrote the book, after that event. And, I don't know what year that was, but it would have probably been in the 1930's or late 1920's, eventually, then, he settled and he stayed there. And, because he had also a

problem with the existing racial bias because of the internment, he declared himself as a conscientious objector. He did serve some military time, but, he was considered a conscientious objector. I do have a picture of him in a uniform of some kind, but I'm not exactly sure how much time he did serve in the Army or whatever, because he was always very controversial.

ET: And, his wife was the person that eventually went, uh—went to work on the bomb.

MF: Yes.

ET: Interesting.

MF: Yeah.

ET: Were you in contact with him at all during the time when he was working
(inaudible)_____.

MF: Well, in the early years of my growing up, my mother would write him letters and they wrote back and forth in correspondence. And, every once in a while, he would write a very, very severe comment, and very disturbing comments, almost to the point where they had been real upsetting instances. (inaudible)_____. But yet, she would just talk about him to us in glowing terms, “Oh, this wonderful person, this wonderful brother of mine and he's so talented. He's so talented.” And, as I said, we always idolized him, but, yet he had this tremendous problem with racial, anti-racial, didn't want to be associated with the Japanese. It was like he didn't want to see us or be with us or anything and well, it was rare that we ever saw him.

ET: He decided his own heritage.

MF: Yeah, he was like that, very much like that. He was very cutting with his remarks. It was not easy to be around him because of that.

ET: Now what happened to—

MF: And then, my mother got married—

ET: And, your mother got married.

MF: —and raised five children, and my uncle, the youngest one also got married, and he went into the Army. He was in World War II. He joined—yeah, he joined the Army.

ET: But, he wasn't killed over there.

MF: He made it all the way to Italy and it was at that time, when they thought that he was going to go into active, you know, combat or whatever and the war ended. And, we were very lucky that he came back alive. But he did come home on furlough, and we did meet him. He would come to the farmhouse at Boys Town and as children Toni and I would jump up and down with excitement.

MF: (inaudible)_____ and yet to me, he was like a big brother because he was older than me; I saw him as a young man. So, to me he was just like a big brother.

ET: Your parents got married and they had how many children?

MF: Well, they had—first, they had me. I was the oldest. And, they had to give me a Catholic name, so they named me Marilyn. But then, my Japanese grandmother wanted a Japanese name, so I got the name Yoshiko for my middle name. And then, I have a, um—because I am Catholic, I have a confirmation name and that's Frances Cabrini and then, I have my maiden name, Takahashi, and then, my married name, Fordney. So, I have a lot of names. (laughs) [Note: The name Fordney is a chosen name because my husband and his older brother changed their last name Goldberg to Fordney due to the racial bias in New York.]

ET: Now, when were you born?

MF: Um, I was born December 22, 1936.

ET: In Los Angeles?

MF: —in Los Angeles at St. Vincent's Hospital at 3rd and Alvarado. And, at the time, before my birth, my mother was working at the house of a doctor, Dr. William R. Molony, Sr.

ET: William R. Molony, Sr.?

MF: R.—middle—R is the middle initial.

ET: Okay.

MF: —Molony, Sr.

ET: Okay.

MF: He was an Irish general or family practitioner in Los Angeles and his wife was—I would say—probably in the early stages of Alzheimer's. And, they didn't know that it was Alzheimer's. They just thought it was some form of dementia. So, they needed my mother to help there at the house, so my mother was working there, ironing, cleaning, and doing laundry, making a meal, taking Mrs. Molony to the movies, you know, going on the bus, whatever, because they—my mother didn't drive. So, they would either walk places or go on the bus, and Mrs. Molony deteriorated slowly, during this time. My mother described different instances of things that happened there and you could kind of tell that it was Alzheimer's, because the woman was only in her forties, when this developed. She wasn't really that old and the family wasn't gonna have her institutionalized. They wanted her kept at the house, so when I was born, Dr. Molony delivered me. And then, it was after my birth when I got a little older, my mother would take me to the Molony's to play while she worked, so I knew the Molony's from an early age. And then, my sister was born about three years later on July 6, I think, 1938, I

believe. Let's see when that was. I'm trying to think when she was born, but I think that's when her birth date was.

ET: And, what was her name?

MF: Her name was Leona and I could never say Leona. They would call her Oni for short, and I put T on everything, so we called her Toni.

ET: (laughs)

MF: And her middle name was Tai, T-a-i, which is a Japanese name, Takahashi. And, she's never married, so her name is still Takahashi to this day. The next one that was born was my brother, and he was born on—we sometimes celebrated Easter for his birthday. I believe it was April the fifth, I believe, 1942. And then, my next sister was born January 1, 1945, right after the war, and her name was Maeve, M-a-e-v-e, Inouye, I-n-o-u-y-e, and her middle name was, actually, her middle name was Maeve O'Brien Inouye. O'Brien was for—because of my grandmother, but Inouie was her married name, and she was divorced and had two sons. And then, my youngest sister, Esmé, was married to a Hawaiian Japanese [Glen Hiranuma] and Esmé was born on, uh, November 27th, I believe, 1951. And, we celebrate hers on Thanksgiving. Actually, we celebrate each one of us on a holiday, mine at Christmas, my next sister July 6th was July 4th, and we'd always celebrate hers on the 4th of July, and then, my brother's Easter and my baby sister January one was New Year's and then, the youngest was on Thanksgiving.

ET: That's pretty convenient.

MF: Yeah.

ET: It's very close.

MF: And, the younger sister married and had one child, Gemma, but, their marriage didn't last a real long time and they divorced. And, she reverted back to her Takahashi name, so the name Takahashi is still what her name is.

ET: Now you were born and what was your father doing at the time that you were born?

MF: Okay, my father—my father was first working in this market in the produce department, and we were living in a small, um, little, uh—I guess maybe it was like a one bedroom apartment above a garage, uh—

ET: Still in Los Angeles?

MF: —still in Los Angeles. And, we had a Ford car that had, like, a what you'd call a rumble seat which is a thing that folds back, and you can sit a couple of people in the back of this with their—so it was out, like, outside. A rumble seat is like an outside thing.

ET: Okay.

MF: And, because I was an only child for a while, I was always very lonely and my mother made this doll about three feet high, with a skin that zipped onto it. And, you could take the skin off and launder the skin and my father designed—helped design the face. And, they stitched on, like, little braids and this little doll was large enough that she wore five—oh, I would say, probably five, maybe six months to a year old clothes. They were about for a year old child's clothes, because we could buy things that would actually fit on this doll. And, what's very interesting and which I only discovered after my mother's death, I kept thinking about this doll. The name of the doll was Bella and the doll that was designed first with kind of small little eyes. And, they weren't happy with the eyes, so they took the stitching out and redid the eyes and the eyes were made, like, little round quarters, you'd say, with blue centers. And, it was all embroidered and everything, and

she had red braids that were made out of yarn, and I just never questioned it, the doll. I took her everywhere with me. I would carry her with me.

ET: Who named her?

MF: I think my mom named her. I am really not sure who really named her. I'm not sure if I named her or not. (laughs) But, like, I'd say, "Well, let's take Bella." And, we'd get into the car, and we'd go to the movies, like, a drive-in. So, it was quite common for me to carry this doll just everywhere like another companion, a person, and she had little black velvet Mary Jane shoes. She had a little blue pinafore on and little dresses that had patterns in them and a little collar. The dresses were similar to what a child would wear that era of that day.

ET: And, your mom made all of these?

MF: And, my mom made them because she—we didn't have money to buy things, so she made the shoes. She made everything. I don't recall that the doll had any stockings because I think she just had the shoes. (laughs) I don't think my mother could make any stockings. My mother just barely knew how to knit or anything. But, what was very interesting is some of my early photographs show the doll with me in different places, where we would be sitting or doing things. I was so attached to her that she became, like, my—you know, like my sister in a sense. When I married and our house burned twenty-five days after our marriage, the first thing my mother asked me after this happened, when I saw my mother for the first time, she said, "Oh, what happened to Bella?" Bella died in that fire.

ET: Ok.

MF: It was kind of a trauma. You know, it was, like, wow, my whole past is gone. Very interesting things happen, you know—but the reason I mentioned about Bella’s hair and her eyes is because after my mother died, I one day went to a writing class and started reliving my past. And, the teacher was having us make journals and she would have us take episodes and then she’d say, “Those of you that want to read them, you can get up and read them.” So, I happened to write some little insignificant thing about Bella and then I got up to read it. And, when I was reading it, the students asked me about how she looked. So, I described to them how she looked. And then, I thought to myself, “Why did she look like that?” I’ve never questioned it before.

ET: Right.

MF: Well, when I was born, my mother never liked the way I looked. She didn’t want me to look Oriental. She wanted me to look very Occidental. They have a very different look, but when I was born, I looked more like my dad. I had some of her features, but as a child, I was very much like my father. And, I was really, like, my father’s girl because he just adored me. I was his favorite, and the other children didn’t like that very much because, well then, as we go on in years, they could see that he was very favored to me. But, we had so many years together without them, so that’s probably part of it.

ET: Right.

MF: And, because I looked Oriental and she didn’t like that, she made this doll totally Occidental looking. The doll had red hair, which an Irish person might have. She also had blue eyes—

ET: Right.

MF: —which a person would not have if they were Japanese.

ET: Right.

MF: And, I never realized that, until after she died.

ET: So you probably didn't pick up on anything as a child with your mother about the fact that she was uncomfortable—

MF: With the way I looked.

ET: —or with the way she looked. Was she very Anglo looking or—

MF: She was very much more Anglo looking. She had high cheekbones. She looked like Gene Tierney. She had kind of brown hair. She was a beautiful woman. Her photographs don't photograph the way she really looked, because she wasn't photogenic. Now when I photograph me and my sisters are all pretty much photogenic, uh, except for one that's, uh—that is more Occidental looking. She is not as photogenic as we are. Three of us, me and two of my other sisters, are very photogenic. But, as I've gotten older, I tend to look a little more like my brother and sis, because my eyes have gotten larger and more creased on—you know, I've always had little lids, but they got much more intensified as I've gotten older. My lids have gotten very much more Occidental looking, and so from that standpoint when I was little, I just really couldn't even tell I had no eyelids. It wasn't until I got to be maybe a teenager, that you even noticed that I had eyelids. So, my lids were not as apparent and she didn't like the way I looked. But, you know, that never—

ET: Did you know all this?

MF: —seemed to bother me.

ET: But, did you know—did you understand this as a child?

MF: I didn't seem to—it didn't seem to register. I was really more unconscious about that. It was—it's just sort of as I got older and realized that one of my sisters was born more Occidental—she started to immediately show her favoritism towards the way that that child looked. And then, I realized then, and that would have been in 1945, so and I was born in '36. So, that would have been—

ET: You were old enough.

MF: —uh, eleven years later, yeah. But then, I realized that she didn't like the way I looked, and she didn't like the way my next sister looked, either. She kept saying, “Oh, she looks like Grandma,” which was the Japanese grandmother. She didn't like the way she looked, and that child was old enough to realize, “Oh, my mother doesn't like the way I look, so I don't like the way I look.” So, she never liked the way she looked. She always thinks that she doesn't look good. She's a—she's got a cute face, very photogenic, and when she was, oh, I would say in her teens when she photographed, she looked like a Japanese Mitzi Gaynor if you've ever seen Mitzi Gaynor. Mitzi Gaynor was a wonderful dancer in the movies. And, she has a very cute, pert way of looking, so she had a beautiful face, but she never saw herself that way. So, she—that part of it was negative.

ET: Well, your mother—and then you had your—excuse me, your father, who favored you.

MF: Yes, I did.

ET: Now were there—you mentioned that there might have been some issues between you and your siblings—

MF: Yeah.

ET: —and probably understandably, so because somebody in there didn't get any favoritism at all.

MF: Yeah.

ET: And, some people got too much.

MF: Yeah, well, one of the—

ET: Or none, you know.

MF: —yeah, well, one of the problems when we were in the internment camp—and we were there for four months at Santa Anita Racetrack, what happened was everything looked alike, so my mother put a big duck—a paper duck—in the window, in case we went in. So, when we went along the buildings, we could see which one was our door to go through. There was nobody along there. We had one bulb that was a light bulb in the middle of the room, and my father constructed bunk beds that we would sleep one over the other, so it was a concise room in that small area, so that we had walking space. By the time, then my brother was born and he was an infant, so we didn't have to have a separate, you know, bed or anything. And, we stayed there the four months and they had the bathroom in a fenced little building, where you walked over to the bathroom and every—and there were, like, rows of sinks. And so, you'd wash up there and brush your teeth there and go to the bathroom there. Everything was done there, showers, everything. When you went to eat, they had, like, a mess hall. They converted one of the buildings there into this huge mess hall, where people stood in line to get their mush in the morning and one morning they had, um, a riot. And, I can remember as a child standing in line and sitting there, after eating or while eating. Everyone got disenchanted, and we were all thrown out of the mess hall, because we all rioted, because they got tired of eating mush every morning. Well, Japanese people don't eat mush for breakfast. They eat rice and soup and pickles and fish and it's a whole different kind of breakfast

for those that are from Japan especially and those that were raised in a Japanese manner. So, people weren't very happy about that, and I can remember that very distinctly being thrown out of that mess hall and-um, the riot. And then, when we went to school, we'd have to walk a distance to another long building some ways away and they had tables that we'd sit at, the different classes. And, on the way to walking to the school, there were some twins and different kids that were out in the morning and they would always taunt us and tease us. And, I don't know really what about, but I mean, it was an unpleasant experience and I didn't like it.

ET: Now was this in camp?

MF: In the camp.

ET: Okay.

MF: And, the camp had barbed wire all the way around, so you could not really get out of the camp. And, there were guards at different places that you could see that were in towers up there.

ET: Now, let's go back to your family and when all of this hit. When World War II came, what happened, what happened with your family?

MF: Okay, I—

ET: Where did they go?

MF: Okay, we were living at 37th and Halldale on a corner lot that had a commercial, you know, part of it. It had a house attached and then, the commercial area. So, my father was developing this rare plant nursery. By that time he had gotten involved with plants, and he was going to go to school to become an architect, a landscape architect. So, he had developed this nursery and-uh—[recording pauses]

ET: I'm sorry, your father was going to school—

MF: My father wanted to go to school to become a landscape architect and then he started to accumulate these rare plants, so a rare plant nursery, and then, converted much of that area to rare plants and had a very nice nursery growing and started to get involved with gardening and landscaping at that time. And, adjacent to our area, on the next corner across was a small, little house and there was a family that lived there with a lot of children. And, my mother would let me play with those kids, so the kids that I grew up with were the Mexican-American kids. I had a little friend name Don Ameci, who was a little boy that would come to play with me and he didn't have one eye. His older brother knifed his eye and so he only had one eye. But, he was my little friend that came and we would always have fun together. He'd play with my toys and I would just beg him to stay because I was—I didn't want any children to leave. I was really always wanting him to stay with me. And, the little kids that lived across the way, my mother gave them my old clothes. Anything that I wore out, she would give, that I outgrew—she would give them. And, they lived in a little house that only had one light bulb. Everything was dark there and it was very miserable the way they lived. They were very poor, so we were a little more upscale in the sense that we had this nice nursery going and we lived in this house that had a really nice configuration to it. When the war hit, I was attending Maryknoll School where my mother had actually, uh—was an orphan—but they had a school now and attached to the Catholic church there, where she had gotten married. So, the school yard—I was there every day. I was put on a bus to get to the school and I was in kindergarten. And, in kindergarten, they started to learn the Japanese language, as well as other things that you learned there and you stayed there the whole day. And, in the

afternoon you took a nap and then, you took your blanket with you, so that you could nap there on the floor. When the war came, it severed that school, because I would no longer be able to study Japanese and I would no longer be with my classmates in kindergarten.

ET: Now this came—and now you brought up a very interesting subject. Did, uh—in your parents' house, they spoke primarily Japanese or primarily English?

MF: Well, in my parents' house, they spoke primarily English, but when my grandmothers and my dad's mom came, we would always—he would speak Japanese with her. So, we would hear them, but, we only knew a few words that we were trained to say. For instance, if my grandmother came to see us, we would say good morning, good afternoon, or good evening in Japanese and we knew how to say “thank you”. We would say just minor things. I mean we never really learned how to say full sentences. So, going to this Japanese school was having that as a second language was a very important aspect of my growing up. And, when we were interned, that was disrupted. Now because I was taken over to the camp for four months, a lot of things happened in that four month period of time. And so, we did get schooling there and maybe we did have some classes in Japanese. I'm not quite sure exactly what they did teach us there, because I remember going, but I don't remember all the lessons.

ET: Well now, what happened—and of course, you were very young, but do you remember what happened when you were taken out of school? What happened to your father's nursery? Where did that go then?

MF: Okay, I did remember some things. I remember sitting on the front steps of the house and also standing over by the curb, actually, watching them bring things out of the house. I couldn't quite put together exactly what was happening.

ET: Your parents didn't say anything about it.

MF: Yeah, they were bringing things out and I couldn't quite understand why they were taking everything. And, where were we going? It was a very disruptive thing. I was very upset by all of this. I was kind of confused. I can remember being confused and wondering what was going on and where are we going? I couldn't—I couldn't understand all of it.

ET: Did any of the neighbors around you come by or give any sort of (inaudible)_____.

MF: Well, yeah, there were people that helped us store some things, and I know that they sold a lot of stuff and were trying to get rid of it. The plants they had to pretty much give away. It was difficult to get rid of those things out of the nursery. A lot of the stuff that we asked people to store were things that we thought, well, we would like to have after we came back, like some cameras. We were not allowed to take cameras, so we had some cameras and we took those and put them in a place to store them at a friend's house, which turned out not to be such friends, because it turned out we didn't get a lot of the stuff back. But, I mean—

ET: So, they—

MF: —they defrauded us.

ET: —so you're standing on the corner and you're watching your parents go in and out of the house taking things.

MF: Yeah, and then the next thing I remember we're in the camp in this black, tar-papered house—

ET: In Santa—

MF: —in Santa Anita racetrack—

ET: Okay.

MF: —and that there was a lot of confusion going on. I mean our whole life was disrupted because, you know, we got up, and you know, well, where do we eat breakfast? Well, we had to walk over there. And so, it was a whole new learning experience, trying to get used to what was going on every day.

ET: And, you were the—it was just your family in this little tent or house or whatever.

MF: Yeah.

ET: You didn't share it with any other families?

MF: Yeah, but, the houses were all joined together. It was like a barracks, so there were many houses all together, but that each one had a different door that you went in.

ET: Okay, and that's why your mother put up the picture of the duck.

MF: Uh-huh.

ET: Now, during this period of time, do you remember any reactions or emotions by your parents as to what was happening? Do you remember hearing anything on it about the news or why this was going on, or was it just—did anybody explain to you what was happening?

MF: I don't think that they were explaining it, no, and I don't know whether I went and asked.

Uh, I really didn't—

ET: Well, you were very young.

MF: Yeah, I was only—by that time, I was about five and a half. By the time we got out of there, I probably was—I could've—I'm not sure if we left there when I was—I had my birthday or not, but my birthday is in December. I'm not sure. It could have been, like, and then I would have been six, so by the time I got to Boys Town, I probably was six.

ET: Now you brought up a good point. What—well, and all your brothers and sisters stayed together, so you all came over to Santa Anita.

MF: Just one sister was with me, Toni, which is Leona and my brother was an infant.

ET: Okay.

MF: It was just the three of us.

ET: There were just three of you; that's right. Okay, so now, what happened—how did you end up at Boys Town?

MF: It was an unpleasant feeling there—my mother—it was because she was a “Mick.” At that time, “Mick”¹ people were not accepted by Japanese families. If you were “Mick”, it's like some families would almost alienate you or ostracize you, like they didn't want to be near you. Even my grandmother, that was my dad's mother, rejected me as an infant. She didn't like me, because I was a mixed and she was pure Japanese supposedly. But, she didn't want to have a mixed grandchild. She wanted a pure Japanese grandchild. So, that was part of it and my mother realized, well, we're mixed. We're not the same as these other people. They're not gonna be friendly to us. There must be a way out. So, she realized that Father Flanagan was an Irish priest. Maybe he could find a spot to hire my dad and she wrote a letter to him and my dad signed the letter. And, it appealed to Father Flanagan to see if he could get us out of this place, because he had saved so many boys from, you know, prisons and from detention camps and things like this, that maybe there was some way that my father could find a job to help the boys at Boys Town. Well, it was a clever way to do it, because Father Flanagan appealed to the government and the government said “yes” — that he could take us out. If he had a job to offer, he could take us out. So, he made arrangements for us to come and we got on a train, my mother, my

¹ Derogatory word for Irish people.

sister, my brother, and me. Now my dad had to drive a truck, because he needed to bring some beds and a refrigerator and what little things that he could carry back there. So, he started—he loaded what he could, got it out of the storage that we had and put it into his truck and started to motor back to Boys Town. It took him three days and three nights. [He did not sleep because when he first stopped to get fuel and something to eat, someone asked him if he was Japanese. He replied "No, I'm Chinese." He got back into the truck and decided not to sleep at a motel but to drive without sleeping.]

ET: And, Boys Town was located in—

MF: Well, Boys Town is on the outskirts or suburbs of Omaha, Nebraska, and is a separate city considered, a city that's near off of Millard, so it's kind of between Omaha and Millard, this little town. And, when we took the train, we had to stay there on it overnight for two nights. I mean, it doesn't take you that fast and I can remember my sister getting sick on the train because, you know, it's like getting carsick. I didn't get sick. I didn't ever have that kind of problem, but, she got sick a lot in cars and on the train. And, my brother was still such an infant; I don't remember him getting sick because he was just a baby. Now, when we got to the railroad station, it was at night and Father Flanagan came to meet us at the station at the depot. And, he had this big, brown bag of candy and (laughs) I'll always remember that, because we got into this car and he's taking us to this hotel and he says, "You're gonna stay in this hotel overnight, until I can find a place for you to stay at Boys Town." And, he says, "Here is this bag of candy for the kids, you know." And so, he gave us this big bag of candy. Of course, to a kid that's just, like, wow! You know, it's the greatest thing you could ever imagine, so it was a big deal for us. Anyway, we got into this hotel and I can remember looking out the

window and watching him as he drove off in the car. And, eventually we then left the hotel to this farmhouse that was about—well, it was on the edge of the fringes of the Boys Town land. So, there must have been something else he owned and it was on this land. And, the farmhouse was old, but, it had a well of water that was drinking water that was from the—I guess you would call it from a well that was dug deep. And then, it had a well that was from rainwater that was used for washing our hair. The water that ran in the house, you could not use because it was all rusty, so you would have to use the water that we had to pump it to bring it in. And, we used to take baths by warming the water on a stove that we would put corn cobs in to heat, you know, to burn the corn cobs to make the heat. And then, you'd put this pan of water on there and heat it up and then put it into a big tub that was there that you could then—it was like a little tub, and you would get in that and take—have our baths.

ET: With hot water.

MF: Yeah.

ET: So, you didn't have any running water, and they had the outhouse, an outhouse?

MF: We had a—like an—well, we had an outhouse there, but we also had an indoor, plumbed bathroom upstairs that we could use. So, we could use the toilet. That was fine. We did use the toilet.

ET: Wow!

MF: But then, we had another house in the back that was attached to the farmhouse and then eventually my aunt—we sent for her and my Aunt Cherry which was my dad's sister, she was—we got her out of the camp. So, it was a matter of trying to get people from the camp. So, there were several families that were—

ET: Eventually moved over.

MF: —eventually moved over.

ET: Oh, so there were other relatives at that—that you—

MF: And, other people, not only relatives but other friends, other people that wanted to get out and we were able to appeal to the Father to try and get these people out and he was able to.

ET: Wow! Now, we had talked a little bit about food and farming and that kind of thing. When—do you remember that your parents farmed the land?

MF: On this farmhouse, they had a hayloft. You know, it was a second barn. We had a silo. We had a—like a big, almost, like, pig sty, but we raised goats there and we did have some pigs for a while, and we had just different—I mean it was a different style of living than we'd ever known. [Insert Photo #2 Takahashi family in front of farm house shown Margaret and Toshio James Takahashi with children Marilyn Yoshiko, Leona Taiko, and James Martin, Jr.]

ET: Very farmish.

MF: You know, very farmy and I believe we all went to visit a German farmer that was nearby, where we got our milk and cream. We had to take our container over to him. He'd fill it up. We'd watch him milk the cows. I mean, there was just a lot of farm life that I really grew up for the five years really literally on a farm, although I didn't spend the whole time on that—in that farmhouse. Eventually, the Father built a series of homes in the shape of a six, so that they went around this perimeter that shaped a six and they were brick. The houses, the original farmhouse, was wooden that we lived in and it had a porch and then one little, kind of a back porch area and kind of a front porch area. And,

to get from the main road of the farmhouse to the road or the main road, you had to walk a great distance to get there. It was like a gravel road that we went up and I used to walk to school every morning because there were no other roads.

ET: Now where did you go to school?

MF: I went to a country school, District 60 school. They had numbers on them and all the— all the grades were in one classroom, from one to eight. And, they went from kindergarten that I recall had its own grade.

ET: So, you really had more of an association with Boys Town particularly. I mean when you go to school there—

MF: Yeah, I did eventually. What happened is, for a while, we went to the country school and I made friends with some of the students there, walking back and forth and all, and sometimes, I'd bike with one gal who had a little bike. She'd put me on her bike. Eventually, they turned one of the brick buildings at Boys Town, which is now the museum building there, they turned that into a school and the nuns, the Polish nuns there, one was Sister Mary Agnes and she taught all of the eighth grade in that little building on Boys Town Proper, which is now the museum for Boys Town. [Insert Photo #3 Father Flanagan attending Christmas play shown with students who are children of those that worked at Boys Town, Nebraska L to R: Jack Noda, Leona Takahashi, Marilyn Takahashi, Michael Merrill, Peggy Crawford, Mary Lee Brau, Ronald Witcofski, Victoria Fujita, Kathleen Melia now Sister Kathleen Melia, Ronnie Melia, cannot name the little Japanese boy in the front row.]

ET: Ah!

MF: And then, towards the end of our life there, the post office was converted into our school. They had their own post office, the Boys Town post office and they built a new one, a new Boys Town and when they built the new Boys Town, my dad helped to landscape it. But, another person had probably he had a degree in landscaping from a university already and they put him over my father and my father knew more than him and became very disenchanted. That's one of the reasons, also, why he left, but that part—the post office was then our school also, and that building is still there today.

ET: Now you brought up a good point. What did your parents do as an occupation, while you were at Boys Town in the initial years?

MF: In the first years, my dad in the winter months would handle clearing the roads in Boys Town, because it snowed so much that they would have a crew of kids often helping him plow. But, he had—he ran, like, those big bulldozers or snow shovel type that would scoop the sand or the, um, snow over. Now, Boys Town is built very uniquely. Underneath Boys Town, they had the tunnel system and you could walk from one building to the next in these tunnels, so that you don't have to even go outside. So, when I would help the nuns with their preparations for Mass and help them with the church linens and all of that, we would walk from maybe the place where the laundry was, getting the things and walk over to the church, but we did it all underneath the ground. There were tunnels all through and there are lights that you can go to and turn on. So, I learned how to walk through all of those—the tunneling system there. It was very interesting. (laughs)

ET: I guess!

MF: Because not many places are built like that.

ET: No!

MF: Oh, and then the summer months, you have the grounds to keep, so he would go to—and-uh, he landscaped everything, planted everything, made sure everything was trimmed, all that. He had twenty boys that he would have as a crew that all trained to help him. One of the—one of the fellows, Buckingham—Bucho—Commander Lloyd M. Bucher of the Pueblo Incident,² uh, he had quite a few boys—one boy was an Italian kid that had killed his father. I remember them very well, because they would come to visit the family and we became very close to them. And, even after he left there, my mother continued to correspond with them. One of the boys was a very handsome young man and he married one of, um—a U.S. American, American beauty pageant, queen, one of those ladies. And, we kept correspondence with him for many years. There were quite a few boys that my dad kept correspondence with and people even to this day, I still correspond with those that were associated with Boys Town. And, of course, my teacher, the nun, I kept correspondence with her until she died.

ET: And, her name was—

MF: Sister Mary Agnes.

ET: Sister Mary Agnes. Now your parents basically worked or at least your father worked (inaudible)_____ Boys Town. And, your mom obviously took care of you and—

MF: My mom—

ET: Go ahead.

MF: What happened—

ET: Okay.

MF: What had happened was after we lived in the farmhouse—

² The *Pueblo* incident involved the 1968 seizure and hijacking of the USS *Pueblo* by North Korean military forces.

ET: About how many years were you at the farmhouse?

MF: We were at the farmhouse a couple—at least a couple of years.

ET: Okay.

MF: I'm not exactly sure, but, I know it was at least a couple of years. Our family did come there. My aunt came and her family [Edward and Cherry Takahashi Hotta]. We also had another family that came, Jerry and Teru Hashi and their baby daughter Kimi. But, I don't know about exactly where they went, where Jerry went, but, I do know that he was there for around—and something—again and I'm not sure exactly what job he used to have. But, at any rate, he eventually moved into the house that the father built, but, they also had basements that were all cement. And, he had a plot of land that was adjacent to that brick house, that was large enough to have a nice garden to raise tomatoes and string beans and carrots, beans, potatoes, and squash and all kinds of vegetables, so much, that we had more than what we could eat. So, my mother would—well, we would all go out there, and we'd pick them and put them in my little wagon. And, I would go around the six and distribute them to the other families and the other families didn't want to just take. So, they'd always give me some coins to put in my piggy bank; we didn't have any stores around. So, I put it in the piggy bank to save for when I went into town, which is maybe once a month or so. I mean, I went there every two months again, because we had to take turns. All the children couldn't go. You had to take turns, if you wanted to go. But, at any rate, my dad then decided to build a greenhouse, because it's so cold there, you couldn't raise a lot of crops, unless you had a greenhouse. So, he dug into the earth high enough, deep enough so you could stand in this thing and then, he built a frame over it, so it was protected with the ground, but most of the house was under the ground. And,

he had a little stove in there of some kind that you put in there to raise the heat. Well, I don't know exactly how it ran, but what happened is it caught fire one night and the whole thing burned. And, I remember that very distinctly, that thing happened, and he had to go back in there and start all over from scratch, and he—the whole thing, with a tent. And, he had to do a lot of experimentation there on plants, before he could figure out what was gonna grow there and work in different ways that would work in that climate in there. We learned a lot. My family learned a lot about survival in the coldest of the cold. It got seven degrees below zero. We had a fire one time in one of the Boys Town art departments on the top floor and as the fireman was putting water on the building—I was watching him. He was putting the hoses up on this building as—and it was so cold, as the water came down, it turned into gigantic icicles all around the side of the building. That's how cold it was and in the summer months, it was so hot you could hardly stand it. It was always, like, 104 degrees.

ET: Oh no!

MF: It was very hot, very dry heat, always over a hundred.

ET: In Nebraska.

MF: Yeah, very hot.

ET: My goodness.

MF: So, we were in the sprinklers all the time in the summer months.

ET: Now you had mentioned that your family decided to leave Boys Town? Why was that?

MF: Well, okay, what happened before we left is that we had a tragedy happen that was just absolutely devastating. We were in this brick house—we were having our breakfast.

And, my brother at that time was about three years old and he was like a little man. He

followed my father around with the tools, carrying a little hammer and walking around. He just adored my dad and he would walk around wherever he was and carry on and do different things, like, if my father was hammering, he was hammering something. He was like that. He was just adorable, chubby little cheeks, a handsome little kid. And, my mother just idolized him and thought the sun and the moon were in this little boy. Well, he got measles and my sisters and I—you know, we had measles in the farmhouse, in the first house, so when he got measles, we didn't catch it again. But, he got measles and we were sitting and having breakfast and he was one who loved to eat the butter off of his bread.

ET: Okay.

MF: And, we actually had churned real butter.

ET: Not margarine.

MF: Not margarine and so he wanted to eat this butter. So, he asked for more butter and my dad went and put some more butter on and he went to eat the butter and he keeled over, and he hit his head on the table. And, that was the end of it. That was the last thing that was normal. We sat there kind of in shock, but what happened??—he has measles, but what's happening? He went into kind of a convulsion, so my parents right away got panicked and they called the infirmary. And, a Sister answered there and she immediately sped over to the house and she pulled him up by the feet and shook him to let all the saliva out of his nose, because of his convulsion that he was having. And, it was just a horrific experience to see what was going on there. They immediately rushed him to the hospital, as fast as they could down to Omaha and when they got him there, he

was put into a contagious ward, uh, one of these wards where they think that you might have something that's contagious—

ET: Right.

MF: —because they thought maybe he had polio, because they didn't know; at that time, polio was just coming to be in the forefront. And, they thought, Gee, if he has polio, maybe someone is gonna catch it and all this.

ET: Right.

MF: Well, he was in a coma for two months and never woke up and he had a fever of over a hundred some degrees and they had to put him in an ice bath. And, my mother never left his side. She stayed there and they brought a cot in for her. She stayed there day and night, so we were at home and I was—I was left to have to try and take care of what was going on there, you know, if we needed something to eat, if we—you know, I mean, a chaotic situation. My dad was leaving the house to go—and I—

ET: So, you were left alone to take care of—

MF: —yeah, we were left alone to take care of things, so it was really kind of a disruptive thing. And, we knew what that child meant to my mom and dad and my dad broke down and cried. That was the only time my father cried and it was a very traumatic thing.

ET: Now were any of the relatives there to help.

MF: My Aunt Cherry came over right away and she said, “Kneel down and pray.” Now she was not a Catholic, but she knew right away. She goes, “Kneel down and pray.” We all knelt down and we started to pray because we thought maybe something—the prayers could help the situation.

ET: What eventually happened?

MF: Eventually he came home, eventually, but, his coma was like a slow waking up. It wasn't like he just would wake up like this, because he never talked again.

ET: Really!

MF: No, he never—he was scaring the family, so he went back to a two month old baby and he was that way the rest of his life. And, my parents were so devastated by this that my—and he never—he didn't walk. He didn't. He was like a baby. He came back into the crib.

ET: Did they ever determine what it was?

MF: Yeah, it was measles encephalitis. He had measles encephalitis and they said that normally someone with that severe a case usually dies. Oh, he was very strong and he lived through it.

ET: And, how long did he live to?

MF: What happened was is that my parents kept him at home and he had a lot of love and they continued to take care of him. My mother cared for him twenty-four hours around the clock the rest of his life and when she got to be seventy years old, she got to the point where she could hardly lift him. And, by that time he was on a full-time catheter. He always had to be fed, could not go—couldn't feed himself except maybe finger foods. He'd pick up peanuts or something like that. He had to be taken to the bathroom, because he couldn't go on his own. He was always in diapers, because if he had an accident, she had to clean him. She had to bath him. She had to do everything for him. Her time attention would then be devoted to him.

ET: Right.

MF: Her time for us was severed. I had gotten the most attention of all the children. The second one got the second amount, but only for a limited time, because first, then the camp, and then, this boy was born, of course, got all the attention. They both paid attention to the other two, but that little boy was the focus of their whole life.

ET: Right, what was his name?

MF: They named him Jimmy, after my dad, but we nicknamed him “Poopsie,” and “Poopsie” was the name we called him around family members. But, his legal name was James Martin Takahashi.

ET: And then, who was born after James?

MF: Okay, Maeve was born in 1935, which is when this happened. Okay, when that happened, she got so little attention as a growing individual, as an infant, that she—as a teenager—was rebellious. She gave the most problems to the family and even to this day is the one that does not get along. She is constantly in conflict and never got along with my dad and never—in other words, it was always this friction, constant friction, constant conflict. And, I see it because of the lack of the love and the attention that she could have gotten, maybe if my brother had been a well child, but he was not. And so, we tried to provide the best that we could and under the circumstances, you survive in a different way. You function differently than a family that is like a regular family. Um, we both—my—all of my sisters and I are very independent. We function very much alone. We’re loners. We—we are different than other people. I can be in a crowded room and sitting at a table all by myself and everyone else is at other tables sitting with other people. They all need to be with each other. I don’t. I can sit there and be totally content just sitting there watching them.

ET: So Maeve was the last child?

MF: Uh, Esmé.

ET: Esmé.

MF: Now and so she got even less.

ET: Less now, did you notice this rebellion with Esmé or was she—

MF: Uh, no, because—

ET: —the baby?

MF: —okay, she was the baby, so she did get more attention. (telephone rings)

ET: That's interesting.

MF: —so, you know, by that time my mother was into a routine but she—[recording pauses]

ET: So now, we have the incident with your brother. What prompted the leaving of Boys Town?

MF: Okay, what happened—

ET: Was that shortly after this event?

MF: —uh, it was, um—it was about two and a half years after that that my parents decided that it was time to think about leaving and the reason was, because they knew the California weather was warmer. They knew that he could find work here. They knew he could go to university here and get his license and certificate for doing landscaping and they knew that if he could get a house here, then, we could all live together and maybe make it back. So, that was the goal; that was the goal. So, the first step was sending my dad back first with my—with his mother. So, they came first and they looked for a place to buy.

ET: Now did they—did anybody ever come back to Los Angeles to the old town to find the house or the—had it been sold?

MF: Um—

ET: And, the nursery and all of that, was that ever a—

MF: No, the house was totally vacated and all of the plants were gone, so there was no reason to go back there.

ET: Okay.

MF: They started looking in South Central Los Angeles, but, more towards Jefferson and Arlington area, which would be considered kind of in a nice area, because it was near Adams, Crenshaw and at that time, it was considered a nice area. They thought that they were near enough to a Catholic school, they buy a house there. So, they put a down payment on a place on 30th, um, near 30th and Jefferson that—30th and Arlington, right near Jefferson. And, it was near the Holy Name School and there were places that you could go off to, to go to market and things like that, so it was convenient. And, you could get to the bus line into the other trolley, you know, that we had. You could do other trolleys, rail cars, that we had. So, it was the best place to go, so we decided then to motor back. And, my dad had bought a truck and he loaded what they could, but, we could only take bare necessities. They couldn't take a lot of stuff, so we had to get rid of a lot of stuff again. And our pets we couldn't take. I was devastated and I cried all night from that, because I was so devastated that we couldn't take the pets. I was just crushed and my dog had died by that time. I had a dog that the Boys Town boys gave me which was originally called "Winky" by the boys, but, we renamed it "Spunky." That dog eventually died, so I wasn't that concerned, but, I was upset with the cat not being able to

come. And, we had to get rid of a lot of our play things, because that was considered frivolous. We needed things that we needed, more practical things, beds and—

ET: Right.

MF: —some clothes and things like that. So, he made this truck and it had welded onto it—he had welded it across the top, just like a more modern day covered wagon. And, he stretched across it a piece of large canvas, so that we could travel, because there wasn't enough room in the cab of the truck. They could only take my brother, my mother, and him, and the three of the kids, which would be my sister and me and the young—Maeve and the three of us would have to stay in a featherbed at the top of his truck. The first night traveling, it was raining all through Kansas and it was just flat land and he decided that we would stop there and he would buy a piece of plastic that he could put into this and make a window for us, so we could see. So, what he did was he made this window, and we sat in our feather bed and to see where we were—what the land was like. And, it was quite waterproof, although every once in a while, when it rained, (laughs) it rained—when it rained a lot, water would come down and start a new leak. Sound asleep and it woke me up with it on our face. But, at any rate, we would travel and we mapped out a route where we would see some of the best parts of the United States, like the Painted Desert and the Petrified Forest and the Grand Canyon. And, my sister who gets carsick, told me that when we got to the Grand Canyon, she didn't want to get out. She looked out and she said, "Oh, what a big hole." And, she went back to bed, but of course, I had to get out. I was very—I'm the curious one and I have to see everything. And every once in a while, we would stop for food and stop to stay over at a motel at night. And, we had nine—or it took us eight days to get back and I would say that it was one of the

most wonderful experiences that we had as a family, because my parents could never travel together anywhere in their entire marriage, because of that brother of mine who was sick. The only time my dad ever took a really lengthy trip was either with relatives to Las Vegas, you know, that would come to visit or he took one trip to Canada, when he was with the cousins up there. And, he motored up and back, which was actually one of the highlights of his life, because he really enjoyed traveling. But, my mother—the only time she traveled, was once to Chicago to visit a cousin that she heard about that was from Ireland and she had to go alone. And, she was worried almost the entire time there about her boy, so she didn't, you know, have an easy time. It was more a—it was unrestful, like.

ET: Not completely enjoyable.

MF: No and then she got back relatively quickly, because she didn't want to take a lot of time away from him.

ET: Now, what year was this, because by this time, obviously, the war was over, because you were able to freely move about the country?

MF: Yeah, this would have been, 1948, I believe. We started back in about '48 and I'm trying to think if I was even in sixth grade. I think I was about fifth grade and then, I went up to eighth grade in that school.

ET: So, you found a place.

MF: Yeah.

MF: We found a house at 2271 West 30th Street, right near 30th and Arlington and a big house, had one kitchen and it had one bath. And, we moved three families in it: my Aunt Cherry, who was by that time she had two sons; my grandmother who now had my step-

grandfather; and they had a child, Aunt "Vickie" Victoria Yoneko [Fujita]. "Vickie" was born a year after me, so she's a year younger than me, although she's my aunt, and then, my Aunt Cherry and her husband [Edward "Eddie" Hotta] with their two boys [Edward, Jr. and Michael] and then, my aunt would have a third boy [Denis] in that house and then, my mom and dad with the five of us. And, we all lived in that house.

ET: Oh, my goodness.

MF: And, we lived there for three years and it was absolutely a living hell, because we were on top of each other.

MF: Well, we had to be perfect; we could not have any problems; we could not have any disruptions of any—of the routine. It wasn't common for me to bring home somebody from school to play with, because there wasn't room for them. I mean, there just wasn't—it just wasn't the thing to do. I did have my play house from the neighbor who stored my play house and so, the play house that my dad built, we moved into the back yard. So, we did have a little play house, but there wasn't any room in the house to do anything. We had one room, where all the beds were, you know, for all of us kids, but the other rooms were set aside for my grandmother and for my Aunt Cherry. They had to have some place to stay and it was really cramped quarters and we had only the one bathroom.

ET: My goodness, and did,

MF: Well, we were trying to save money, so we could go out on our own to find our own house. That was the goal.

ET: That was the goal.

MF: Each person was—each family mentioned having their own, you know, get their own house, if we'd save enough money to get it.

ET: Did that happen?

MF: What happened was that my Aunt Cherry and my grandmother found a duplex that was not too far from there and they purchased that and moved the family over there, eventually. And then, my mom and dad after the end of three years, we moved out first. We were the first to move and we moved into what had been an old farm house right below the big mansions on Adams Boulevard. Our house was located on 27th Street near 7th Avenue. And, that house, we had to do a tremendous amount of fixing, because it had French—uh, it was built in the French style—for repair. In fact, the weeds were, like, two feet high around the whole thing and then they had an old carriage house, where they kept the horse and buggies. They had stored an actual carriage in there—it was a lot and a half, so it was not a regular sized lot. It was an oversized lot and so, we were glad to get that, because then, my dad could build on additional things onto the other part of that house, which he eventually did. He accumulated more money and then, eventually put tile on and built a three-car garage below and an apartment upstairs, that had two bedrooms and then, a bachelor apartment and a shop, a tool shop, below that. So, it had potential for, you know, expansion.

ET: Was there anybody left back in Nebraska?

MF: Most of the family, they all left and only after forty-four years, I went back there as a benefactor, because the government gave each surviving internee \$20,000 for being at the camp. And, I took part of that money and donated it to Boys Town and the place where they have, like, a little get together party, was at one of the houses in the six. And, it was

owned by one of the original boys at Boys Town and his family were some that I went to school with, Ron Witcofski, and I kept close friends with Ron, uh, all these years. Even to this day, I still correspond with Ron. Ron's father was one of the original boys at Boys Town when Father Flanagan was the director.

ET: Oh, my goodness.

MF: And, even Sister Mary Agnes (our elementary school teacher) came to the reunion forty-four years later. [Note: One of the students Kathleen Melia became a nun in that Franciscan order and brought Sister Agnes to our reunion.]

ET: Really?

MF: Yes.

ET: And, what year was that?

MF: It was before my husband died, so it would have been, probably in about 1995 [actually it was in 1991], around then.

ET: Now, so now, you're all—so you now have a new house. The family is in a new house. Were there other significant moments in time that you remember regarding your family or regarding yourself, during your stay at that house at your new residence?

MF: Well, we all had our chores to do and you know, since my mother had to take care of that brother, we had to make sure that things were done. She had certain things that we did to our rooms, things that we had to do, cleaning and stuff to do, vacuuming. Everybody had chores that we did.

ET: Everybody pitched in.

MF: Everybody pitched in. But, we still ate as a family. It wasn't, like, just run and go kind of thing. We still did eat as a family. She cooked every night and we all sat around at the

dinner table. And, that was when we were all together every night. It would be rare if somebody wasn't there, because we all did sit together, which is kind of rare today that you see people eating together. But, at that time, we all ate together.

ET: Never even think of the fast food.

MF: Yeah.

ET: Now what was your father doing at this time?

MF: He worked very hard in Beverly Hills at the homes there. Mostly he worked for Jewish families that had beautiful homes and some of them had large estates that wanted Oriental gardens. And, by that time he had gotten his special license for landscape, because he had finished his special course at USC and, he was now a licensed architect. And, we had some clients that he still [kept up with] maintenance and landscaping—so new clients that were landscaped, then he had the maintenance ones, so that they kept the money coming in. But, I know that when times were hard sometimes, he'd have trouble getting the money from a client. And so, he would get very angry, very, very upset by this and you know, those times, I think part of it is the insecurity, you know.

ET: Right.

MF: He's the bread winner and later on after my mother got older, she wanted to go to art school. So, I decided to enroll her in night school. I would work in the daytime at a doctor's office. In fact, the son of the doctor that was my godfather, Dr. Molony, was then my employer, whose son was an orthopedic surgeon. And, they shared the same office, the father on the one side and then, the son was on the other. And, what is really rare is that as I graduated from school—

ET: It was night school.

MF: —from night school, that very day when I graduated, it was the following Monday that I went to work for this doctor, because he needed somebody. And, it's by a matter of circumstances in their family, a death of one of the other sons in the Molony family that was also a pediatrician doctor who had a terminal illness that attacked him very quickly, a kind of cancer, that, um, we heard about this position for me. And, she said, "Oh, Winkie knows how to take shorthand." So, right away I was taken right into Dr. Molony's office and I was working there as a medical assistant and doing medical transcription, taking shorthand straight from high school.

ET: And now, you were just referred to as—what was your nickname?

MF: Oh, "Winkie."

ET: "Winkie"! Who gave you that name?

MF: Oh, my mother gave me that, but before I was born, from a radio show called *the First Nighter*. Don Ameci, an actor, was playing the character the night she happened to be listening and this show—in that particular show, he played a character called "Winkie," and she liked that name. She thought, I'm gonna call my firstborn person "Winkie," and she thought, "Oh, I'm gonna have a boy", of course, you know. Well, when "Winkie" came and was brought to her hospital room, that's what she was.

ET: (laughs)

MF: It didn't matter whether it was a boy or a girl; I was gonna be called "Winkie."

ET: (laughs) So now, you found the job—were taking on a medical office. That was quite a find.

MF: That was quite a find, because in the days before World War II, you would not be employed as a medical assistant, ever. I took a job there for, actually, reduced pay from

what I could have gotten for working for social welfare or, you know, that kind of office where you get more higher paid with, let's say, the city or the county or the state. I took a lesser fee, because I thought, Well, I'll learn something here and then, I got so interested in the work—I really liked it—I decided to go to night school. So, I went on the bus after work to night school directly from my job to Hollywood High.

ET: Wow.

MF: So, I was working at 9231 Wilshire Boulevard, which is down in the Good Samaritan area or near Wilshire, near Wilshire and Alvarado, was actually very good. And, I was taking the bus all the way to Hollywood, to Hollywood High School.

ET: And, you were taking the evening bus.

MF: Taking my evening classes, there I would take transcription. And then, I'd go in early to work, an hour or two early, sometimes every night, every day, an hour early to transcribe all my notes.

ET: Wow, now that's pretty amazing.

MF: And, I did that for five years to get the information.

ET: And-uh, was that a certificate or (inaudible)_____.

MF: I got certificates and those certificates burned in the fire. Everything that I—the only thing I had was with me, when I realized what was happening. Everything that was left was with me.

ET: Oh, wow.

MF: Yeah.

ET: Well, we need to talk now—we should get to the fire, but let's talk a little bit about what was there on—because now you were working, going to school. What was the rest of your family doing?

MF: My father was working at his position and being the main gardener. My mother started to go to art school with me at night and going to night school. Well, what happened is that she liked that night scene kind of activity, so eventually on weekends, she decided that she would like to go to work cocktails in a restaurant, because that way, she could get tips. So, she thought, "Well, an Oriental restaurant," so she found a place to work, Imperial Gardens, where she wore a kimono. And, she got good tips and my dad would take her there at night and pick her up at two in the morning. So, she did that for many years.

ET: Well, who was taking care of your brother?

MF: At night, he didn't need care because he was sleeping, so what happened is—

ET: And, she'd run off.

MF: —and he gave her an out. So, what happened is, is that she'd get out to do the cocktails. He would take her over for the clock time when she'd start and then, he'd go over around two and pick her up. What happened is that she made friends there with the piano player, who also was a mixed lady from Japan, English and Japanese. I actually became a pen pal to her son and my father sponsored him and got him to this country. And, his last name was Takahashi by the way. Her maiden name was Takahashi.

ET: Oh, my goodness.

MF: Yeah, I mean his name was Takahashi. Her married name was Takahashi. She had married a Takahashi in Japan. Isn't that weird?

ET: Yeah, it's so weird.

MF: Very strange, but-um—

ET: So, your mom took you there—

MF: Yes, took to the art classes and became really a magnificent artist and she loved to write, so she wrote lots of poetry. She's just wrote poetry, when she was in high school, so some of those poems appeared in her yearbook there. So, I have those poems. My—the second sister, Toni, Leona, went to USC. My parents decided that she was the most academic, so they would have enough money at that point really to send her to school, and plus, she was offered a scholarship, which was very flattering that she was able to get the scholarship. She made it four years there through that university and also got a Master's degree.

ET: In what?

MF: In speech.

ET: Okay.

MF: And, she learned to teach the deaf and worked at the John Tracy Clinic, both, before and after she graduated. She also went to England and established a school for the deaf that is run via a political foundation for the Queen, named after the Queen [The Elizabeth Foundation] and she lived there for several years. And then, she came back and was teaching in Santa Ana at the public school. [She retired in her 60s].

ET: How convenient, and now what happened to Maeve?

MF: Oh, Maeve?

ET: Uh, your sister, yeah.

MF: Oh yes, the rebellious one got married [Kimbo Inouye] and she had two sons, Casey and Duffy Inouye. Um, Casey didn't, uh, materialize as well as we would like. He kind of became, uh, very, much on drugs and things, so he had a lot of problems and the youngest son is working. I don't know what has happened as far as his work, because he was—both of them worked, but, all of a sudden, they were never able to hold onto a job a long time. He would end up with all kinds of problems that all were related to drugs and just—he had a problem after he got into his teen years. The marriage didn't last and she [Maeve] never remarried. She moved back to the family house, which by that time, they had built this unit in the back. And Toni moved into the bachelor apartment and then, Maeve took over the larger apartment with her sons. My parents more or less raised them, because they'd eat their meals at the house and everything and it became a problem. My mother had that baby boy and was trying to help the older boy who was extremely sensitive; he wasn't able to cope with things, turned to drugs, and that became a real problem. I was successful and I didn't want my hard-earned money going for drugs. So, I severed the money relationship. I thought if that's what it takes to get hard-edged about it, I'm going to do that. And, I am that kind of person. If that's what it takes, I'm going to—I'll do whatever it takes to reach the goal, whatever it takes. I've done horrendous things in my life to try and reach a goal, things that most people would never attempt to do, because they just wouldn't. They wouldn't take the risk. I risked not being loved any longer by my parents, because if I cut off what they could use, you see, and I think that some of it was relayed in anger, because things that I gave them, like, a washing machine for dishes, a dishwasher, I'd overheard my mother say, "Oh, she just gave us this dishwasher, so she doesn't have to come over here to do dishes."

ET: (laughs) Oh, man.

MF: You know and that hurt. That's—what was that? It's, like, that was, um, you know—I don't know what year it was, but I mean people had dishwashers....

ET: Well, you—were they still living at the house and you were out on your own then?

MF: Oh, this was out—I was by that time married, had very successful—

ET: Okay, so we should really get to you then. Oh—and the youngest sister—

MF: The youngest sister was just going to school and the second to the youngest really made USC—the youngest one, let's see. Okay, she probably was— what happened to her is the two of them went to USC. After they both graduated from high school, they—

ET: Both of your younger sisters.

MF: —yeah, did go to USC, and the middle one, the one that was the problem one, didn't really go to school there to take or to get a degree, but the youngest one did. She went on to work there full-time to get a Bachelor's degree, to get her Master's degree. She continued to work there full-time, until her daughter was born. She put her husband through school. He left her, after he got a degree. She's like me. She will never give up. She—the two of us are very much alike in every respect and she went on to get her Master's degree then. And then, when she—when both of my parents died, I decided to split the inheritance, so that my inheritance would go to the three of them and it was a mistake, because the other two got greedy. And, they didn't want to sell the house and give to the youngest, and I said, “No, I'm sorry, you have to,” and I had to hire an attorney. And, the attorney said, “No, the Will reads that share and share alike for all four of you and if she gave her section to all of you, then you're supposed to share it three ways. And, you have to do something to pay this other one off.” So, they had to get the

estimates on the house and give her the money, so they estranged themselves from me, because they didn't like that. They took their anger out, because they were angry at my dad for one thing. They were very angry at him, because of the way he was. They didn't get along with him and they decided not to talk to me. But, it didn't bother me really, because I felt they needed to grow up. I was the strong one. I was the one that did help them a lot and I had given \$5,000 to Maeve, because she was born after the internment. And, I thought, part of the money from the \$20,000 from the government—I will give her five. I gave another \$5,000 to the youngest, so that they could use it.

ET: Ok.

MF: And, I really didn't need it. I had a lot of money. So, I felt that they—that was the Christian thing, but even after that, after my parents' died and I gave them my share, that one who was the troublemaker just seemed like she didn't want to be nice.

ET: So now, you—so you—are you not communicating?

MF: No, they don't want to talk. I've tried to go—I've even made effort and they've been very upsetting, because they didn't want to talk to me about it.

ET: But, you talked to your youngest sister.

MF: The youngest sister, what I decided—I had another house and I moved her up into the house and I said, "You can pay a small amount of rent and when the house is paid off, you'll take that money and continue to put it into a bank account. Your signature is on that account and when I die, you will own that house." I said, "I have willed the house to you," so in the Will; she is willed that house. And, in addition, she has a bank account, because all of the money that she pays in rent from this point on—the house is now paid

off this year and going into that account. And, right now it has over \$4,000 in it, so it's gonna keep the house up. I mean, I keep that house up just like I feel it's my own.

ET: So, she's going to be the final—

MF: She loves it. She learned now that she doesn't have to be scared. She was living down in the area with drive-by shootings—she's now living in an area, where she doesn't even have to lock her door, when she's in her house. She—when she first moved in, she locked the door. I said, “What's this locking the door thing? Look, this is your patio. Sit there and enjoy it.” You know, so now she's enjoying her house. She has a garage that has an automatic door, so all she does is pop the door. Immediately, she's going out. I mean she has all the—she has an automatic sprinkler system, doesn't even have to water the lawn.

ET: And, what street is it?

MF: Right off Island View Street at Oxnard Shores near the beach in Oxnard.

ET: Okay.

MF: She lives a block from the beach. She's right near the beach and lives next door to a park, where she can bicycle, jog, and walk.

ET: Wow.

MF: I mean it's the most wonderful—and the house itself is now—if we listed it on the market, it's worth \$500,000.

ET: So, it's worth a half a million. Oh, my goodness, now we have to get to you.

MF: You know, she—the two of us get along great and we do things together.

ET: And, you're still—and you're still—and you have this great relationship with her.

MF: Yeah.

ET: Very good, now how—now, going back to you, because you are the center of attention here, so now, you were working and going to school, and you graduated.

MF: Yes.

ET: What happened after graduation?

MF: After I graduated—

ET: When did you move out or when did you—

MF: Oh, I moved out at the age of thirty-three. I felt guilty, because leaving my parents with the brother that was disabled; I didn't feel that it was my right to just up in my twenties and leave. But, then when I got to thirty-three, I realized that I would never have a life of my own and have my own person, unless I went away and really found myself. And, also I needed to be away, so that I could make a decision on my own to find somebody that I needed for me—I dated a lot of people—I was engaged several times—there was always something, some problem that developed. And, some of it was either a comment—sometimes it was a comment that my parents would make and sometimes not, but I thought, you know, this isn't a fair deal here. I need to find myself. So, I went to Sherman Oaks and I rented an apartment there, but I was extremely lonely.

ET: What year was this?

MF: This would have been 1969, 1968.

ET: Now were you still working in the medical office?

MF: I was working in a medical office. By that time, I was working at UCLA. I had gone into medical research. I worked for a while for a biophysicist there, who was a Russian professor from Odessa, Russia, who was actually kind of like an Einstein, a new Einstein,

and he obtained Nobel Laureates for UCLA to work there. He was a wonderful professor and—

ET: What was his name?

MF: —his name was Alexander Kolin, K-o-l-i-n and he was a biophysicist that was top in his field. He developed the electromagnetic blood flow meter and electromagnetic meter for research and he was a person who was a pioneer in that area. And, he also wrote books in that area and because I was very close to him, what happened is he was—practically, he was a paranoid person. He had a paranoid personality. Because of that, he was very suspicious of anyone, that he had rights to be, but it was even more than that, you know. And he had everything under lock and key and we all had different kinds of keys. And, he had masters to some masters and I would change these locks every so many months. But, because of this personality that he had, I functioned very well, because I was in—I was psychic to him. In other words, I knew in advance what he was thinking, so I could function very well with him. If I knew that I would put a piece of paper on my desk and he might walk in and see it and think, oh, somebody else saw that and why did she leave that there like that, so I always turned everything over. [recording pauses] So, I worked with Dr. Alexander Kolin for about three or three and a half years. The Vietnam War hit. Much of my salary was paid by grants that he obtained and some of it was paid by the university. But, most of it was paid by grant money and the grants were severed, because the Vietnam War crisis immediately began to cut. Because of that, Dr. Kolin had to let me go, so I went to seek another position. I liked UCLA so much, that I found a position with Dr. J. B. Peter, M.D., Ph.D (whose last name was P-e-t-e-r) and he was in the Department of Medicine. And, he was a physician who specialized in muscle disease and

arthritic and rheumatoid arthritis, but, also had a private practice and he needed someone for his private practice and to also do some of the work there, that I would do, that I was well experienced because of my work with Professor Kolin. Professor Kolin had me doing so many different kinds of positions, I was not only a secretary; I was like an administrative assistant. I worked myself up to a Level 5 secretary, but, I did not convert to administrative assistant, because I did not want to lose him and to go over to those other kinds of responsibilities. So, I did photographic work for him and I actually even constructed the catheter blood flow meter, when I helped with manufacturing them in the laboratory for his experiment, because he taught me and this other technician how to make them. And, I would help in producing those and I even got named on papers that he would do, because of my work. Not only did I type the material up, I was actually on, you know, the files to do this work and the animals and whatever, because, they had every kind of thing going on in this lab. We would work with lasers at that time. I'm very far advanced in my knowledge, because I have worked in this laboratory doing research for many, many years. We worked with fiber optics which now, there's fiber optics coming to the public, but at that time—this was in the sixties and we worked in the fiber optics. So, I was doing things quite advanced for that time. And then, I worked—after that, I went to the Department of Medicine and Dr. Peter knew that one day, he would lose me. He goes, “You're too gifted for me; I know I'm gonna lose you, but, if you could just stay with me, as long as you can.” Well, I was only there about a year and it was very interesting, because when I was interviewed for this job, he asked me about my background and I told him that I had lived in Omaha, Boys Town (inaudible) and he said, “Oh, I was born in Omaha.” He said, “I'm a Nebraska boy.” And so, I found that in

common with him and of course, he was a family man. He had, like, I think, seven kids and-uh, they were Catholic. And, they were very much, uh—you know, I mean we were on the same wavelength from that standpoint, so we got along wonderfully and he was a wonderful physician. I enjoyed working with him a lot and my teacher who taught me my terminology called me up one day, and she said, “I have a school that was calling to hire a teacher. Uh, I think it’s time that you leave and teach.”

And, I thought, Well, that’s not a bad idea. I would hate to leave here, because it’s a pretty risky thing to go into teaching. I’ve never been trained to teach. But, I said, “No, I’ll do that.” So, I gave my notice to Dr. Peter and he hired my cousin, Mayo Uchiyama Yerington. My uncle raised them on the side, so she came to fill my shoes. (laughs)

And, so I taught her everything that I could teach her for, I think, just a few days by the time I left and she was with him for several years. When I left, I went to a school, Casa Loma College in Pacoima, California and it was just kind of a ghetto in which I taught.

And, it was run by Colonel Elton—

ET: Who?

MF: —Colonel Elton, E-l-t-o-n, a colonel in, I think, the Army—

ET: Okay.

MF: —who had special money that he was given under a federal grant to run this school for a year. So, I was to teach all of the students who were assigned there full-time, so I’d drive down in my uniform. And, I’d drive there (laughs) every day to teach the students, and it took—obviously, they just protected me and I was just like their savior. They just loved me.

ET: So, what exactly did you teach them?

MF: I taught the medical transcription, medical terminology, medical office procedures, and they took English and Math from the other black teachers there. When I'm driving down into this ghetto, there are drive-by shootings all the time, drugs addicts on the street, druggie families where the place was and these kids they just loved me, so they protected me. And, I was never harmed and my car was never touched. And, they really felt bad when I had to leave.

ET: Well, how long were you there?

MF: I was there after—for a year, and it was very, very difficult work. I pretended that I was like a student. I wore the same uniform they did. One day I—all of them—one of our people in our class was sick and she ended up in the hospital. So, I said, “Well, we'll go over and visit.” So, we'd all stand in uniforms going in one at a time and they felt awful unfriendly. Well, I was like a little kid. I've got my pony tail and my little uniform on. It's real far out. I thought, “If they call out the Colonel.....” I was truly just like the kids who I was teaching and I thought we just do different things. The hospital personnel telephoned Colonel Elton to report us and the hospital staff threw us out of the hospital. They did not realize that the students were with their teacher visiting and not there by themselves.

ET: And, they loved that, huh?

MF: Yeah, and but, then I thought, “You know, this is not right” and I went to the Colonel and told him what happened. I said, “They thought I was a student. I am the teacher of this—of these students....”

ET: Right.

MF: So, I thought, I'm going to few more places and do things, so I went once to a cultural welfare office and I sat with my students.

ET: And, how they were treated?

MF: It was an eye-opener. The whole thing was an eye-opener. I saw people, white people, driving in from another state, coming into the office and getting on welfare. I mean, I couldn't believe! It was unreal. And then, I went to a furniture store. One of them wanted a piece of furniture for her place, so I went down with her, and I thought, "My God, this stuff is cardboard!" It wasn't even made out of wood. It was cardboard. It was kind of—it would just deteriorate. I said, "Don't buy this; don't buy this." I was pleading with them, because I knew what it was and it was very expensive.

ET: Well, did—so did she end up buying anything?

MF: Not when I told her not to, but I don't know what she did after I left. I went into a gas station there and I marked my mileage down, how much gas it took, everything. I knew exactly what the car would take, how many miles. So, I went in there and do you know that they actually had the gas pump fixed, so they looked different than in other areas of the country? That just amazed me. Even the gas companies would pull it. And, I went to the market. The market fruit there was all, like, old, stale, like, next day kind of stuff. It wasn't fresh. .

MF: (inaudible)_____. And, one day they [the students] asked me. They said, "Did you really live in an internment camp?" And, I said, "Yes." They said, "Did it have barbed wire?" And, I said, "Yes." They said, "Do you think the government would ever come here and put one of those up?" They thought they were living in an internment camp. I thought, My god, I don't believe it!

ET: Oh, my goodness. When you were—one thing I didn't ask was when you were in—when you were at the internment camp, was it—there there was the barbed wire and that whole thing—?

MF: Yeah, um-hm.

MF: And, they did have guards up in those towers. I don't know if they ever were loaded rifles, but I do know they had rifles in the towers.

ET: So, you were in an area by blocks, and these would be tar paper barracks.

MF: Yeah, yeah.

ET: And, I know [the students} they related to you.

MF: They did very much, yeah, and they would—they started thinking in the medical terms of the slang terms, like the kids do in school, street talk. And, I started playing a game with them called "I-Ching," which is like a fortune telling game in a sense and what it does is, you take these coins and you throw them and they form a pattern and you then go to a book. And, you read in that book that pattern and sound and they related it to the problem they're having at the time. Well, I discovered that people from Africa, they are very mystic because they grew up and are—and are very aware of that, how the culture is. And then, the children were constantly—their survival depended on their psychic capability, so that they could go into an area or a store or anywhere and they could immediately feel or sense some either body language or just mentally or just the way a person would even stand how that—how they're gonna be received and what that person is thinking and feeling about things. And, because of that, they immediately enjoyed that so much, that they would come after school. They didn't go for the counseling—in fact, the counselor saw me as a threat. It was very damaging, so right away, I decided to

leave. So, I left the school and the students wouldn't even come back and so, I came back in a part-time position, just for the summer. And, then from there, I went into teaching. I got three credentials to teach the adult school and at community colleges and I got a lifetime credential, also. So, I have three different credentials allowing me to teach subjects, because of the experience that I've had in the field and as I started to teach, I taught at ten different locations. And, the following year, I was teaching at five locations. Those are different schools.

ET: Now at that period of time, were you married during this period of time?

MF: When I was teaching in 1969, I was teaching at Pierce College in Woodland Hills and at Glendale College and North Hollywood Adults, so I was teaching at several places and at Beverly High School. I was teaching at several. I had gotten married August 30, 1970, and I was still teaching at several of those schools.

ET: How did you meet your husband?

MF: I met him in 1959, 1960 when I was, um, at college. I worked two jobs. I worked with my mother in the restaurant doing hat check and then, checks as well, but the hat check, taking her to work by that time and taking her home at night, when I would leave. So, for a while there, my dad didn't have to, because I was there at the restaurant taking her. For two years, I stayed at that one. I stayed partly to help them get their first car and when they got their car, which was a Station Wagon, they said, "Now you pay for yours." So, that's what I did and I paid for the monthly (inaudible)_____ to stay there at the house, because I didn't feel it was good to stay, without paying some kind of rent or to help. That helped them, also, and then, I would pay for my car, but I had to work two jobs,

because it wasn't enough. So, I worked at the restaurant and worked at the doctor's office and also went to school.

ET: And so, you saved up money, and you went and got your car. Was he a used car salesman?

MF: He was—what I did bought was a sports car and I wanted to work at the sports car races. So, the sports car races was a hobby and I volunteered to learn all about my car, so I went to work at the sports car races, in all the jobs, grid girl, scoring, making lunches for the workers, tech inspection, crowd control, just every kind of job, I would work it. Well, Alan Fordney, at that time, was a bachelor in his forties who was announcing the races and he had a wonderful voice, very distinctive. But, there were lots of times when he asked me for dates and I would always say no for ten years. I never even dated. Of all the—anyone I met at the track, I would never date and I kept that agreement with myself. At the end of the ten years, while I was teaching at Pierce College, one of our students invited me to her house at the beach. She lived on the same street he did, in a beach front, and as I happened down that street just to her house, I saw the Fordney name on the mailbox. And, I asked her if that was the Fordney I knew, and she said, “Yes, let's go visit.” So, we walked down the beach and he was gone announcing a race that weekend. She invited me a second time. The second time he was—she was at the market and said, “Oh, go walk on the beach.” So, I was in my bathing suit and I walked on the beach and there he was sitting on the patio with a fellow that was a race car driver from England and a big Great Dane that was—

ET: (laughs)

MF: —ready to come down and bark. So, they invited me up immediately and he invited us for dinner. And, he fixed me a steak dinner, so we had a wonderful time chatting about the races and I discovered that he was born two days past me, December 24th, and then he was also a speed ice skater and I was a figure ice skater. I discovered that we had the same, similar interests like that and that we were very—he was very much like my dad in many respects. He did a lot of things with his hands. He'd do a lot of things. He was very self-sufficient, very independent, very masculine, very much a macho man. He was very masculine and I admired my dad because of that, a very strong personality, very strong, not like his brother at all, a very strong person. So, I thought, Gee, this person is really with it, you know? Now (laughs) I—I've ignored all these years.

ET: What was I thinking?

MF: Yeah, and he was quite handsome and he was eighteen years older than me and I thought about it. And, I thought, “You know, I'm wondering if this is gonna work.” And, he wondered, too, because he had been married for eleven months once and it never worked out. I said, “Well then, let's live together for a year and at the end of the year, we will go back—I'll go back to my apartment and I will keep it for the year and we'll give it up, and I will go back and separate and have a trial separation for two weeks and if we realize that we're—that we were meant to be, then we will marry.” And, we did that, exactly. We separated and at the end of one week, he called me back and said, “This is ridiculous; we are getting married.”

ET: (laughs)

MF: So, we did.

ET: And, how old were you?

MF: I was thirty-three by then. Well, I was, well, thirty-three when I married so thirty, when I left the house, when I left my parents.

ET: And so, now you were married in what year?

MF: Nineteen-seventy, August 30, 1970.

ET: Now your parents were both alive and they were able to come to the wedding?

MF: Yeah, a lady down on the beach that had a beautiful beach house down from my husband, wanted to have the wedding. She was just crazy about me. She said, "If you don't marry that girl, you're crazy. You're gonna regret it." She'd yell that from her balcony.

ET: (laughs)

MF: Half the time I thought she was drunk, you know, never paid any attention. She wanted to have the wedding, so my parents said they would supply the food and the flowers and all that and I was married in a beautiful kimono very much like in Japan with the head piece and everything. And, we got a minister that was a lady from Santa Monica, who gave kind of— not—just like a normal Christian ceremony. It didn't mention Jesus. It just was like a Christian ceremony, just about God, for a gathering of about sixty people. The woman that had the wedding had a home in Arizona and she brought all her beautiful wedding silver and all that, had the house completely done, had the fireplace sandblasted, completely painted that we were gonna be married in and everything.

ET: Wow.

MF: She went to a lot of effort. Everyone dressed beautifully, when they came to her wedding. It was a wonderful event. We had both Occidental and Oriental combination, both a sake toast and a champagne toast, uh, sushi as well as sandwiches and just a lot of things we combined some of, you know, that, some little things, the Japanese culture and

then the other culture. And twenty-five days after our marriage, that house, which actually used to be rented by Elizabeth Taylor when Elizabeth was young—that's her summer house. That house burned completely to the ground. It had a tile roof. When I went back to look at it, the tiles were laying flat, just below they were all perfectly on that roof and it was so hot like an oven emanating from the surroundings that you could hardly stand there to even breathe. You couldn't stand there over the edge to look down.

ET: Now what city was this in?

MF: That was in Malibu on Beach Front.

ET: And, what time period?

MF: Um, it would have been September 25, 1970.

ET: So-uh, now were you home when the fire struck or—

MF: Yes.

ET: —did they determine what happened with that fire?

MF: There was a combustion that occurred they think from the 101 Freeway, which somebody either threw some debris off of their car and it lit up some brush—they also have the feeling that it was set, but, they don't know absolutely positively. But, it was from the 101 Freeway and it ran right through the Malibu Canyon ten miles, jumped up Highway 1 and went right over to the beach. And, we were only maybe half a block from the fire station. The fire station was on our street, right down the street.

ET: So now, were you home? Was it during the day?

MF: Yeah, it was during the day. It caused—it got black, I mean, the sky got black and very hazy. And, we evacuated ourselves. You could only take your cars out and what you could carry probably in two hands. The winds were so tremendous that you could hardly

breathe and by the time we got to the car, we knew that we were pretty—well not pretty sure, but almost sure that maybe it might go.

ET: There was no real notice then, not really anything to speak of.

MF: No, there was nothing to warn us. We just got to the point where, you know, we had to leave and because I was having the two-car—you know, my own—my car was just two people, the lady that gave me my little dog, my first little dog when I was married, she, um—I had the little dog in my arms and she needed a way out, so she took the other seat. And, I think my typewriter and I think one jewelry box. That was it and—

ET: And, was your husband home?

MF: My husband was home and he took his car out, which had a soft top and he had to get out of there without—you know, because the soft top would light up with the fire. Put the wedding dress that was in the suitcase in there and one suitcase that had some papers, and our little proof album with the wedding pictures.

ET: My goodness.

MF: But, that was about all; we didn't take much, just what we had on, was all we had in the way of clothing. We didn't take any clothes and I had all my money invested in paintings that were very valuable and the paintings all burned. Like, the painter—the painting done by at the trial of Commander Bucher, I had that was also a collector's—a historical painting done by a very fine artist, was burned in that fire. I also had a painting by Rico Lebrun who was one of the finest artists and that painting was burned in the fire. He gave that to me as a gift when he was medically treated at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles. It was a silk screen print that he created for a ballet company and he had signed it. And, one of the paintings that I posed for was done by Kathryn Page Porter

which she sent to New York to see if it was approved so she could obtain membership in the American Watercolor Society and that painting burned. I mean there were so many, even a painting from the estate of my husband that was a collector's, from way—from Europe, that painting burned. It was from a—I think it was from a German painter.

ET: So now, the loss—you lost—

MF: There were things that—

ET: —that you could never replace. Was the evacuation quick?

MF: Yeah, the evacuation was really quick, because you just got in your car and sped off, but you could not get motored down the Pacific Coast Highway. They had horses coming across the highway from the canyon to the creek and you were stopped at the creek road and the side up by the church was a big cross, well, that was all lit up and I could see the flames coming down the side of the hill and I just was panicked to try and get out of there soon enough, because I knew that that was gonna come across that road.

ET: And, that was on Highway 1—

MF: Highway 1.

ET: —which is relatively, relatively rural, really, and probably even more so that—

MF: They're all—the, um, manuscripts and things that I was preparing, my research work for the book, for the first book I was gonna write for the textbook, that all burned.

Everything burned, all of my transcription from all of my five years of study, that all burned. All of my certificates for everything.

ET: Now you mentioned a book; what book were you actually writing?

MF: Uh, the (inaudible)_____ for the medical (inaudible)_____, and that would have been, um, after I—some years down the line. I didn't do that book, but that was the one class I

loved teaching at Marymount and had materials for it, and it was—all the materials burned.

ET: And so, that was gone.

MF: Gone, and I had over three hundred pen pals all over the world that I had been corresponding since the age of about fourteen and fifteen, and-um, that's when I developed my writing style. Little did I know that I had developed it in writing to all of these people, uh, through the grammar school, high school, graduation, marriages, divorces, I mean children, everything. I mean I had been writing for years and years and years and developed a writing skill that I was able to later (inaudible)_____ developed it with all those people really inspired all—with all the pictures in special albums. I had three albums of pictures, of all of their pictures, and a special file for each one, and all of that burned. S

o, I lost, like, three hundred people in probably a matter of thirty minutes.

ET: When you came back, there wasn't anything left.

MF: Just the chimney.

ET: You returned then a couple of days later?

MF: Um, it would have been—let's see. I think they let us in—I'm not sure if they let us in the next day or the following day. I think it was the next day that we—yeah, the next day we were allowed to go in. We were allowed to go back and that's when I saw the extent of it. There were eight houses burned in the middle and then it skipped one house and then jumped to the next house and burned it down completely. [Our house appeared on the front page of the Los Angeles Times newspaper the next day]

ET: My goodness, now what happened after that when you came home and when you came back and you saw you had no house? Did you decide to rebuild?

MF: The brothers—the brothers owned a property jointly. The older brother had more of a percentage of interest in it, because his part was—the mother had willed her portion of the house to the older boy, because that was her favorite son.

ET: Was this your husband's family?

MF: Uh-huh.

ET: And, he was, what, the middle child?

MF: He was the youngest.

ET: The youngest child, okay.

MF: And, the daughter was not even living—well, she didn't really live in the house, so she wasn't involved with that. But, the older son had a wife (Lois) and he and his wife lived in the top part of the house. It was four levels and the top two levels were owned by the older boy and lived by the older son, and Alan and I lived in the other unit. And below, there was just a tiny little room at the bottom, but, it was like a little dress room that we stored things in and we lived in the bachelor apartment that he had. And, it was really nice, comfortable furniture, but, we didn't happen to rebuild there, but my husband—at the time of the fire, about a week before the fire, a fellow had hit him in the left arm and it was, uh, like a slap on the back, and it caused a nerve to send—to go down, an electrical shock to go down his left arm and it threw him to the ground all of a sudden. It was so painful, that he looked at his friend and he said, "Don't ever do that again." A week later, he lost the use of his left arm. The message to the elbow no longer would function. He could never—uh, he was paralyzed. He could never move it again. Then

the fire hit and when I realized his arm was locked up, the first thing I thought of was not so much about anything to do with the fire but (inaudible), but, I wanted to know if he had a muscle disease, so I immediately called Dr. Peter and Dr. Peter said, “Get him in here right away.” So, eight o’clock, I took him over there and he was admitted immediately into the UCLA hospital and he laid there for three weeks. So, there I was without a house, with a little dog, a husband in the hospital, trying to teach at five different locations and trying to handle this whole scenario without having anything. People opened their doors to us. Friends opened their doors to us and my family gave me clothing and things. The Disaster Center gave us boxes of food and what-have-you, so for a while I had some places to stay at least temporarily, but, it was a real hard beginning of our marriage. And, the brother—the first week—said, in the hospital room, “I don’t want you with me. You need to buy me out or I’ll buy you out. But, you’re not staying at this house.”

ET: You personally or both of you?

MF: Both of us.

ET: So, he just decided to kick you out.

MF: Yeah.

ET: Was there any rhyme or reason towards that?

MF: They—the brothers never totally got along well—

ET: And, who could find time to do it now, huh?

MF: Yeah and he decided that since he had two-thirds of the house, why should he—but actually, my husband had paid a half on the mortgage every time and also half on the insurance, but the Will, you know, the Will came up with two-thirds to the older boy. So

to make it, you know, easier for the older boy, because he never had any money, couldn't work for anything (laughs) and the house was paid off. So—

ET: So then, what was going on with your husband? What did they find out at that time?

MF: They decided that there wasn't any test that they could—they did every test, but, they couldn't find where the problem was and if they did surgery, it was doubtful. They said, "Well, it's in the neck area. If we do the surgery and the scalpel slips, he could be paralyzed from the neck down, so we have to tell you that in advance."

ET: Right.

MF: So, the surgeon scheduled the surgery twice and the third time they scheduled it—well, the surgeon backed out twice and the third time, we backed out. We said, "We'll live with it".

ET: If the surgeon doesn't have any faith—

MF: Yeah, we just thought—

ET: —you think you should take your hit.

MF: Um-hm.

ET: So now, you have no house and you're newlyweds and your husband's in the hospital. So but, he only had that paralyzed feature in the one arm. It didn't affect any other part of his body?

MF: No, not at that time.

ET: Okay, okay, so then what happened? You got a new home?

MF: So, we got a little apartment down the street that was subsidized by HARP for about four months and we decided to stay there about three months or so. Um, we thought—

ET: This is still in Malibu.

MF: This is still in Malibu.

ET: How long did you stay in Malibu?

MF: We found a beach front home in Oxnard and moved there three months after the fire.

ET: And, then, where did you go? And, how long did you stay?

MF: My husband and I had to find new jobs. He went to work for a radio station selling time and doing newscasts in the morning and I went to teach community college classes at Ventura College. Eventually Alan studied and took his real estate test and obtained a license to sell real estate. We bought properties, rented them, and eventually sold some of them.

ET: Now, are you still married to the same gentleman?

MF: Alan passed away in 1997 never regaining use of his left arm. We had 27 years of a good marriage, traveling all over the world and have had successful careers. Seven years after his death I met at a dance Sandor "Alex" Havasi a civil engineer from Hungary and we married in 2004. We travel the world most of the time helping with our two nonprofit foundations. (see next page for explanation of how these got started). [Photo #4 Panda, Marilyn Fordney, and Sandor "Alex" Havasi]

ET: After the fire, what did you do – did you still teach? Where? For how long? Did your husband ever regain use of his arm?

MF: In 1974-75, Ventura College bought a printing press so I asked if they could print my 200-page syllabus for one of my classes and sell it in the book store on campus. Before we knew it, six schools were buying it at cost. A teacher and friend in San Diego who I shared material with refused to leave my home when she visited stating that I must submit the manuscript to three publishers. I finally agreed and a 4th publisher asked for the manuscript before we went on our summer vacation. On returning from our holiday, all of the publishers wanted to publish it. I researched who would do the best production and marketing job and in 1975 signed with W. B. Saunders Company that is now a part of Elsevier Science whose administrative offices are located in Holland. The first edition *Insurance Handbook for the Medical Office* was published in 1977 and the 14th edition just came off the press in its 40th year of existence (2016). It won a national award and also there was a spin off book from it as well as a dictionary of insurance billing and coding terms. I went on to write more than 70 books in medical assisting to help teach and educate individuals and the books won 4 national awards. The success of the books led to the creation of two nonprofit foundations, Fordney Foundation (for ballroom dance sport) and Havasi Wilderness Foundation (for wilderness, animals, and our ecosystem). I retired from teaching to continue writing the books as I discovered I could no longer do it all.

ET: Now, what have you been doing for the last ten years?

MF: We rent out our beach house in Oxnard and now live in the wilds of Agoura Hills with the birds, squirrels, rabbits, and coyotes. I continued to write and will retire with this 14th edition and will be phased out over three more editions. We will continue to travel and lecture for our two nonprofit foundations as well as awarding scholarships and funding grants to various worthwhile organizations that will help the young people of our future generations. We are connected with Brigham Young University, California State University Channel Islands, California Science Center, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, Tippi Hedren's The Roar Foundation for the big cats, and more than 25 ballroom dance sport competitions across the United States as well as many local elementary schools where we fund ballroom dance sport.

END OF INTERVIEW