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Oto, Noboru

Interview

1981

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John Sawada
Born July 5, 1922, Sacramento, California.
Now lives in Illinois.

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*Robert O'D
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Rosalie Wax: Good morning, is this Mr. Sawada?
John Sawada: Speaking.

Rosalie Wax: This is Rosalie Wax, who called you I believe yesterday.
John Sawada: Yes.

Rosalie Wax: If you have time to be interviewed about your life history, why fine, ~~if there are any interruptions - why, you know, we can stop and do it again. And~~ I wondered if there were any questions that you wanted to ask me about this study I'm doing before we start.

John Sawada: Is this in a book or anything or what? Are you writing a term paper?

Rosalie Wax: I'm 70 years old - I'm a retired professor and I was at Tule Lake for two years studying there.

John Sawada: I see.

Rosalie Wax: I do not have to write a book. I'm only going to write a report ~~just for the Rockefeller Foundation~~ and I won't use anybody's real name.

John Sawada: I see.

✓ Rosalie Wax: ~~They are all anonymous~~ *at Tule Lake,* ~~as they are all anonymous and my object.~~ I had some Japanese American friends and I've interviewed them and this was so interesting that I thought I would interview a few more people who were at Tule Lake.

John Sawada: I see.

✓ Rosalie Wax: ~~My object will be to just write a report on how this affected them. What happened - so I'm getting the life history. Is that enough?~~ *histories.*

John Sawada: Yes.

Rosalie Wax: Well, I'll go ahead and ask: What do you remember about your life before the evacuation?

John Sawada: Just a minute, let me get a pen here.

Rosalie Wax: What do you remember about your life before the evacuation, what were you doing and . . .

□ John Sawada: I was . . . going to first year in college.

Rosalie Wax: First year in college.

John Sawada: Yes.

Rosalie Wax: And what were your plans, let me see, what were your hopes for the future? ~~What did you plan to be?~~

John Sawada: Well, I had - all my high school was my commercial studies. That is to say, bookkeeping, accounting, and this line. And I had anticipated at that time, I loved accounting and everything so much, that I planned to go on into higher accounting jobs, you know, accounting, CPA, and this and that. This was my goal.

Rosalie Wax: And where were you living then?

John Sawada: In Sacramento.

Rosalie Wax: In Sacramento. And how did your parents earn their living?

John Sawada: They were on a farm.

RW: ~~They were farmers, yes. And, let me see, I might ask now, were you born in Sacramento and what year?~~

JS: I was born in Sacramento in 1922. July 5, 1922.

RW: Can you tell me how you felt when you heard the government announcement that the Japanese American people were going to be ordered to leave their homes and report to the assembly centers?

JS: I remember I was at school when they posted all this thing out on the highway. You know the highway right in front of our school there, Sacramento Junior College. And the order came out and you see all these posters on the street. And I said, 'Well, maybe I shouldn't let this thing bother me.' But then things were so erratic - I never believed it, you know, but it was there.

RW: Can I just ask you - it was so. . .

JS: It was real disturbing. Well, it's kind of hard to concentrate with this kind of atmosphere, you know. And so, I didn't know what to do. But anyway, I said, 'Maybe I should finish.' And I tried to finish, but everything, the whole school itself was in a roar, too, you know what I mean?

RW: No, I'd like to hear about that.

JS: Of course, there were a lot of Japanese students in that school and everybody is just sort of giving up. And I said, 'Gee, I would like to finish this semester.' But everything was such a hectic thing to do that it was that it all came down to a point if you got an "A" in a class, you settled for a "B". If you got a "B", you settled for a "C". You know, it went that way and so it finally ended up that I think I left school February, March, April - about a month and a half or two months before the semester ended.

RW: Did you ever get credit for that semester?

JS: Since I did not go back in the same line of course, that is to finish accounting, I didn't even look into whether I got credit for it or not.

RW: I see. I can appreciate that too. I was going to tell you that a fair number of people I ask this question - who were about your age - when it happened, that they tell me they just couldn't believe it at first.

JS: That's right. I told my brother, I said, 'Paul, they'll never take us, I mean we have to go.' This was my ultimate deduction, you know. 'We're citizens,' I said. Yes, my folks, they might have to take, or you know, but they will never take. . .evacuate us from our home. This was my honest belief. As everybody around in my neighborhood sold their equipment, their household things and everything, I said, 'We'll never go.' So we kept everything. We didn't even bother to sell things or anything until about four days before evacuation. And then I told my brother, I said, 'Look, gee, you know, I'll never believe this, but it looks like we're going to have to go.' And he said, 'Yeah, it sure looks like it.' But we didn't sell anything up to that time. . .a week before evacuation. When we came right down to it, I said, 'Gee, it looks like they're going to really pull us out.' So, I said, 'We'll have to do something,' because it sure looks like we have to go. Now, on this basis we had the farm equipment and everything and the crop and everything, I said, 'Well, let's see what the best thing we can do?' And so, we had some good friends, Caucasian friends, and so in Sacramento, there is a man by the name of John Brunner, a furniture store, a very well-to-do man. And we knew this man from a while back through some misfortune, that is to say, my brother got into an accident and Mr. Brunner's car was one of them that got hit. And we got to know this man and my mother had purchased some appliances. .gas range or something from him and she was paying for it and we got to know this man. So, a very nice man, and so my brother went to see Mr. Brunner and said, 'I got all this equipment I have to do something - I thought we'd never move, but we got to do something - it looks like we are going to have to go.' But he said, 'Well, fine, wait a minute.' He had a brother-in-law who lived about three-four miles from where we were farming and he said he needs

JS: some equipment and said, 'Maybe we could take it off your hands.' So, he said 'Okay' and we contacted him and we just sold all our equipment to this man without losing any money, which was. we were fortunate. So we transferred everything to this man, we got rid of the equipment. Now, we kept the truck to the end. We said, 'We'd like to use the truck to the end, because we have to. the owner of the land. the ranch we were farming, said, 'Why don't you put all your bedding and things in my basement of this house and that he has on this farm and then lock it up.' So we did all this and locked it up, and everything and then the last day he came after the truck and then we. the family that was supposed to leave about three-four days later, he held onto his truck too, which was sold and he had it and he took it to the Civic Auditorium, where we were suppose to congregate.

RW: I see. You mentioned your brother. . .how many brothers and sisters did you have?

JS: There are seven brothers and sisters. There are four boys and three girls, and my folks.

RW: Where were you in this lineage, were you the second boy or. . .

JS: I'm the third one.

RW: You're the third, yes. I'm glad you told this story, because you're one of the few who were able to do this, as you probably know. Many people lost everything they had.

JS: Well, like I told my brother, 'They'll never force us to go, because we're citizens!' We're citizens and no way in the world that they could force us. So it is war, yes, but we're citizens. But the picture looked real grim and the last week, I said, 'Gee, you know, it sure look bad, that we might have to go.' So we sort of straightened everything out in three-four days which was unbelievable, because we got rid of the equipment and we had some crops that were coming out and I said, 'Gee, what are we going to do with this.' I think we were just going to have to leave it. And fortunately a man came and said he wants to buy the crop. So we said, 'fine'. And so I don't know, my brother put some price on it and he went to the back and he got everything settled and he sold the whole thing. We were kind of fortunate that things worked out like this. But I would never had believed that we had to leave.

RW: To which assembly center were you sent?

JS: Wallerga.

RW: Wallerga. Was there anything that happened in that assembly center, that makes you feel good today when you think about it?

JS: No. My deduction of the camp of that nature, nothing good could come out. That is to say, yes people are working, but how much work is there? Kitchen work, maintenance, and they had nothing to do. No schools were set up, nothing good would have come out, that is to say, I was old enough to figure that 'No, nothing good is going to come out of this.' . . .At this assembly center because people are just loafing, and they had more time on their hands and I said, 'Well, I have to keep busy, because there is too much time.'

RW: Which of your experiences in the assembly center do you recall the most strongly?

JS: In assembly center?

RW: Yes.

JS: Well, one thing that I never could get over as how was it that a citizen like us, we were born here and a citizen could be behind barbwire without. I learned in history. . . innocent until proven guilty. And this whole thing come true and we're behind barbed wire with soldiers watching us from the outside. This is something that I could never believe that this country would do. And I felt, 'Gee, is this what they've been teaching us all this time.' It really comes down to that you study history, you study the Constitution and is this what it all adds up to, they could just lift you up, take you away, and throw you in the camp like this because of my ancestry. This is really

JS: hit me hard and I said, 'Well, I can't change it; I'm born. What am I going to do?' But what they'll do to you. I felt this was a real political thing and I could never get over the fact that they have such power in a time of hysteria. That they would do this kind of thing. I thought our government was a lot stronger than this all hysteria. I could never get over the fact that they would throw us behind barbed wires like this.

RW: You had done no wrong at all.

JS: That's it, and they would throw us behind barbed wire and give you a number and, you know. . .

RW: . . . like a prisoner. . . exactly.

JS: I thought, 'Gee, now what am I to believe? Whom am I to believe?' These are the questions that bothered me. About the second week we were in the assembly center, we got a letter from this fellow we used to lease the land, the farm. . and he said somebody broke into the building and took everything. A week - ten days, you know, and I said 'Gee, how rotten are the people?' I could never get over this. You're in an assembly center, military police are around guarding you - who wants to escape? You know what I mean? We have no way of getting away. And yet here's a man that wrote us a letter saying that someone broke in and took all of our belongings. This was three or four families' belongings who were in that place and now who took it, I'll never know. Whether he sold it, I don't know. And these are things that come about. It really frustrated me. I said, 'Gee,' you know, it's so hard to say. . . So anyway these are the things that bothered me. I said, 'I could never get over this.' That we are behind barbed wire, I could hardly believe it. had

RW: Yes.

JS: I knew there were friends outside that understood, you know. There was Mr. Pastalockwa, who was my accounting teacher at the Junior College, and he had an empty garage that we brought some things over for him to hold and he was very nice about it. We left little thing like old typewriters and things like that with him and we didn't lose it or anything and he was very good about it and we claimed it after the war and this and that. He was really somebody that I said, 'Well, he gives me a little hope, you know.' And I had this kind of belief, but then I would never believed that they had uplifted us. . .

RW: . . . and done that to you. I have a question that I hesitate to ask. . was it was still a comfort to know that there were a few people who you could really on and. . is that so?

JS: Yes. Of course, communication from the inside - the fence to the outside was kind of nil, but then I had a high school teacher who I corresponded with him and I didn't write everyday or anything, but we corresponded. And I had another high school teacher, who was a gym teacher and I wrote to him. And I had hoped that these people to understand our situation and yet they knew that it was wrong. This was wrong. That they would teach us all this up to now and then uproot us and take us away.

RW: It was wrong. And I would say I can't find an adjective big enough, it was a dreadful injustice. That's how I feel.

JS: Yes.

RW: Well, let's see, they then. . did you go from Wallerga directly to Tule Lake?

JS: Yes.

RW: Then I would like to ask, you talk so well, you kind of answer my questions; I've got them outlined here. Let me see, I'll just ask it broadly this way - which of the experiences at Tule Lake do you recall the most strongly, which would you most like to tell me about?

JS: Well, now it was. .in Tule Lake, there were so many things that sort of stuck into me. That is to say, I had two uncles, a cousin and about two-three distant cousins and my folks in the same camp. Okay, now to be kind of. .to say if I wanted to go out of camp, there was a lot of opposition. You know what I mean? Because one of my other cousins wanted to go out and there was quite a commotion. You don't want to break up a family in time of that condition, you know, to have all this kind of thing going on - to break up - to say I'm going to leave camp or something like that. Having all these relatives in the same camp, it was kind of hard. It was kind of hard to say, 'I want to do this; I want to do that.' And yet it comes about the why should I or who can I to believe now? Because when this registration came out about loyalty and this and that, I said, 'Gee, you know, they put us behind bars, barbed wires, and would force this kind of question on you.' This bothered me. After giving a lot of thought about it, I said, 'No, I'm not even going to register.' I mean, this seemed like kind of wrong and yet, I said, 'They lift you right out and everything and says loyalty oath, this and that.' You know that 27-28 questions whatever it was, that really bothered me, so I let it go. I said 'I'm not even going to register.' This was the position I took and I let it go at that. Until the latter part of my camp days, one day my brother says, 'Well, I'm going to leave camp.' And I said, 'Wait a minute, I'm going to go too then.' And in order to do this you had to get clearance from security. And then this 27-28 questions come up, you got to register this and that. I said, 'Well, fine.' So I registered and got cleared. Of course, they had me registered with another fellow in camp by the same name, and I was on a stop list, and I had to make out a two page affidavit at the camp attorney's office there and then I got cleared and my brother and I left. The loyalty question that was put on us, I thought it was unfair and yet, I had no affiliation that I'm going to sabotage anything. It never came to my mind how I'm going to sabotage anything. ~~It never came to my mind how I'm going to sabotage anything.~~ They would ask these questions, you know. But then in early part of 1945; 1944-45, my brother and I left the camp.

RW: I was going to say, back to the loyalty question - from your remembrance was this feeling of ignoring it, largely by your own thought, your own decision or did you. . were you at all influenced by your parents or relatives?

JS: No, it was no influence of this or that. After thinking it over, I said, 'Gee, this is a most unfair thing for them to ask.'

RW: I would agree. And you took it as your responsibility.

JS: On my own. I took it on my own and I did it. There was a fellow who was working in legal aid over there and I told him, 'Look, I'm not going to turn nothing in because I feel that this is very unfair to be this kind of question to me. You know, behind barbed wires and say this and that without even saying I'm guilty or anything, they have uplifted me from my. .where I lived and we're in a camp like this, I said, it doesn't seem right that they would put this question to me. This is strictly on my own that I did it.

RW: You were a young man then and I can appreciate that. As you and I both know, there were a lot of things that happened at Tule Lake. It was a long and sometimes. .well, there was the farm strike you know, and then the army rule. . .

JS: Yeah, tanks running through the camp there one night. These are so vivid in my mind that I said I could hardly believe this. But then it did happen. That night when the tanks came rolling into the camp, some how or another I was in bed already at 8:00 and I heard this man or somebody hollering for help, and so, like a fireman I got into my. .got dressed and walked outside and here I find this man that lives in the next block and he had a club about three feet long and running through the block and he says, 'I think we killed somebody.' I said, 'What do you mean, you killed somebody?' 'Well, these people were waiting at the wirehouse, people from the other camp that was harvesting the potatoes and things, they came after food from the ice box and then were waiting there and got into a big fight.' The club he had was about three feet long and I said 'My gosh, what do they have now, you know.' But then it just happened, he went

JS: through our block, I was in block 14, and he came through there and no sooner did he come through there, then we hear all this roaring and everything, and there were all these tanks coming through the firebreaks and everything. I think they're shooting blanks, but then they're shooting. And the whole camp was up and rushing toward the administration building. Right at that point I had my younger brothers and I said, 'Wait a minute, we just wait right here, we're not going to move.' And let the other people..they all rushing toward the administration building, and I said, 'No, we're staying right here.' It sort of subsided and about an hour or hour and a half or so and I said, 'My gosh, what happened?' But then we never knew. Nobody knew, you know. But then my sister, my older sister, who is a nurse, working at the hospital, she was on duty that night at the hospital and they couldn't come home. And the next morning going to work the army had put a line where the high school and the wards there, they put a barricade right through there that we couldn't cross the line no more. I think it was about 10:00 or 11:30 when everybody got up to the line. To disperse the crowd, they let go of some smoke bombs or whatever it was and everybody was tearing and walked back. But I had understood that maybe as much as forty to fifty per cent of the people of the camp were in the administration area that night. And they got caught in there and they had to be more or less screened to get back. But fortunately we didn't get mix up in that and we just stayed on our side. They knew that a lot of these people were no trouble makers or anything. But then they did screen out, I don't know, about 200-250 people and kept them in a compound or something like that.

RW: In a stockade.

JS: We didn't go to work for a month or two months, something like that. I don't know and it was kind of frustrating because we were in block 14 and our neighbors were kind of hard core people and you couldn't talk. We couldn't talk to do this or do that and they would hear a lot of hearsay and then they would say things.

RW: It was what?

JS: They would say things, it's all hearsay, they don't know.

RW: Yeah, rumor.

JS: Things got kind of sour in our block - the nurses couldn't come home from the hospital and the military police would come with a cart to pick up her uniform. And you could just imagine. .what are they here for?

RW: What block did you live in?

JS: Block 14.

RW: Block 14.

JS: There were nosey people and I said, 'No, they just came after her uniform.' So that was it. They always thought there was something else more to it and this and that. They were very nosey people, they haven't got anything to do, so I guess this is the way it goes.

RW: Did you find the strike hard on you; what did you do during that period when there was no work and stuff?

JS: Well, there was nothing we could do. Of course, being a family of nine we had two apartments and four of us boys slept in one of the apartments and we had a little. .not a workshop, but we did things to keep busy. And then we twiddle around ? and this and that but nothing much to do and when they started to call the meetings to go back to work, I sort of even hesitated to go there because the people in our block were so, I don't know, nosey people, that they would say things. I was one of the first group to go back, but I was because. . .

RW: You mean, to go back to work?

JS: Yes. Because I was in charge of the kitchen - there were 74 kitchens in the camp and I was in charge of the supply and they needed this and that, so I went back. I had two helpers and we supplied soaps and whatever. On these things, nobody harrassed us or anything for going back. Though our neighbor was kind of nosey, you know. . .

RW: You could say, you just didn't feel comfortable with the nosey neighbors.

JS: Yes, that's right. But then it was better than just loafing around everyday. Then things sort of broke loose and everybody started going back to work.

RW: Let me see, the people voted to stop the strike and they had this Coordinating Committee for a while, you remember?

JS: Yes.

RW: And then of course, I guess you were working. I was there then and then I came in March of 1944. . .the administration let me come in.

JS: There was one of my classmates in high school - she must have been a social worker or not, her name was Marjorie George, I think, and she used to. .I remember her, was in my high school class anyway, graduating class, and when we did evacuate she was at the auditorium registering or checking our registration and I think she came into camp one time. I saw her and that's about it. And there's another fellow that came in, I can't think of his name, but I saw a couple of them that came into our camp, to see friends, you know and that was about the extent of the people.

RW: I was going to say, there was this very sad and terrible thing when Mr. Okamoto got shot and then after that lots of people I was talking to they got very scared of the inu and they said that the Cooperative Enterprises were grafting and taking. .do you remember that at all?

JS: Well, I lived in block 30 before the segregation came. Mr. Okamoto, I got to know them before we left block 30 and came to block 14. The fact that they did not press any kind of charge or whatever it is, that they (long pause) oh-went right along with the army and the opposite end of this that they thought they were informers, you know.(1) But what could they do? That's what I said, 'We're behind wires.' And there was nothing they could do. I don't know what kind of compensation or thing they got. But it was a sad thing and the people said (that) they are with the administration. Nothing good was said, but I could feel for them that they were put in such a situation that well, we lost. .from what heard of him, what could we do; we lost a brother and we can't do anything in this position. So what kind of compensation they got, I don't know either, but then they felt real bad. And on top of that to be called informers or something like that, I thought was terrible.

RW: They were called informers?

JS: Well, that's what they thought they were.

RW: (appalled) Oh my goodness. This inu calling got very, very strong a couple of weeks after Mr. Okamoto was shot and especially when the army didn't do anything and the soldier who had done the shooting, you know, was just sort of. .

JS: . .taken away.

RW: taken away, yes.

JS: . .and they don't know if he was punished or what, no one knew. But then, all in all, you say, talking with my friends, we talk and say, 'What kind of justice is that? They throw citizens, uproot them, and throw us in camp, so what could you expect.' This was some of our thinking that went on, but I said, 'It's kind of hard to say, oh, they punished him or they put him in jail.' Who knows how far it went - or did they? Or was he just transferred and that was it.

[1. Listening to the tape, I conclude that Mr. Sawada is telling me that Mr. Okamoto's family were thought to be informers because they did not press charges against the authorities after Mr. Okamoto's death.]

- RW: I wondered did you remember Mr. Noma being murdered, you know he was the head of the Co-op? How did that affect you and your family?
- JS: No, it didn't affect. Well I said, 'Gee, you know, he was just trying to be good and running an organization or company or store like that, to be assassinated like that.' It sure is something. Now I would say, 'Is there that much jealousy in our people?' And now from way back when I was in high school or this and that, people would say, a partnership among Japanese people are very difficult to conduct and this was always said. I said, 'Why is it?' He said, 'Well, one doesn't trust the other.' And this is the kind of philosophy that goes on in the Japanese group. A partnership, a Japanese partnership is never successful because one doubts the other. I said, 'Maybe there was somebody else that wanted that kind of position.' And then this happened. So I said, 'Well, I don't care to be in that kind of position.' But then to me what he was doing, good, bad or otherwise, I don't know. It didn't seem to affect me in that sense. I said the man was. To me he was doing a good job, but to others, I don't know.
- RW: Well, when I was there, I noticed after he was murdered a lot of people got even more scared to go to the administration area or to show. Be friendly to any Caucasians.
- JS: That's true.
- RW: Because they might be called inu and everybody knew what happened.
- JS: I used to go in and out of the administration building quite a bit. Two-three times a day. And I used to pass Mr. Jacoby's office and I said, 'Hello, Mr. Jacoby.' Very friendly fellow, nice fellow and then I'd go into Mr. Peck's office and get things done, and get requisitions, this and that and be done with it. I don't know, people are funny, you know. Dr. Jacoby, I had high respect for him a very good man, I don't know. I got along with all these people. I did what I had to do.
- RW: You weren't bothered. Nobody called you a dog for doing that?(1)
- JS: No, you know, I had 74 kitchens to take care and I was busy.
- RW: You were a responsible man.
- JS: Yeah, so I went to each kitchen at least twice a week, you know and on the side I used to take care of the trouble they had, that is the utensils, the dishes, this and that, and I took care of it. I got along with all the kitchens. There isn't one that I say 'You don't do this for me or this or that.' No, I kept even keel with every one of them and they had no problems.
- RW: That was a real contribution. That makes me feel good to hear it. I was going to talk about something that was very dramatic when I was there - this started September, October and got much stronger during the end of 1944 - the people who wanted to be resegregated. They said, 'The other people who said 'yes, yes' or didn't answer, we want to be put in a place where we're separate from them. And then they started their young men's organization and it got to a place where they would drill in the morning and say 'washo'. Do you remember that? And I was wondering what your reaction was to that and whether that made you any trouble?
- JS: No. That group of people. There were a lot of them that I knew that was in that thing, but while maybe you don't recall, but Sunday mornings, my friends that use to run food for the kitchens, Sunday mornings, four or five of us that used to deliver milk. And I used to check out a truck Sunday morning and got to the warehouse and load our truck up with milk and we went through about three trucks would be checked out, we went through delivering milk to each kitchen. These people would be running across the firebreak and this and that. But it didn't seem to bother me. Or we should belong to there and being doing that instead of this. It never has bothered me.
- [1. I learned something new from this conversation. In June of 1944, when the hostility toward inu was most intense, the men who were assaulted because they were considered inu were all Issei or older Kibei. Mr. Sawada was 19. Occasionally a Nisei, in his late twenties was threatened. (See Bob Kurusu)

RW: They never pressurd you or your family?

JS: No. Of course, a lot of people said 'Oh, it's good for you.' It was good, but the motives behind it was not the thing that I liked. The regimentation in that sense. This I didn't want. Because in camp we had a lot of time. And due to that fact, I took up Judo, and our hall and or the gym, the place where we practiced was in block 40. And then - there were 6-7 places where they did Judo in the camp. One in each ward. We would go to our place to practice one night and then we would go to three or four other places to practice and I kept busy like this for oh, quite a while. I had enough exercise and everything that I said, 'No, I don't need - exercise in the morning is good, but I don't need that type of regimen.'

RW: Did you know Mr. Kodama who had the black belt? Was he one of the teachers?

JS: He was one of them. There were quite a few good teachers in that camp. I went through most of places to practice. I used to practice four-five nights a week. So it kept me pretty busy and I enjoyed it.

RW: I'd say, if you knew Judo so well, people wouldn't be incline to threaten you. You could take care of yourself.

JS: But then you know I enjoyed it and the people that I worked with, helped with, we had our own minds and we did what we had to do and stayed away from what seemed to be trouble and kept not to close with people who were always looking for trouble. I sort of stayed away from them.

RW: That sounds very sensible to me.

JS: As far as I was concerned. Right after that trouble we had with tanks, we had a curfew. The curfews were one thing. I said, 'I don't have to monkey around with curfew.' So make sure I was home and not running around the block with a jeep chasing after you and this and that. There was a friend of mine that (was) always dashing across the firebreak and the jeep is after him, you know, and I said, 'Oh my God, what are you going to do if you get caught?' He said, 'Well, what could they do to you?'

RW: Put you into the stockade.

JS: Yeah, but then a few young fellows, you know, they used to have these ash pits and one fellow tells me he ran in and fell in an ash pit and he stayed in there. I said, 'Gee whiz, if that was hot, what would you do?' You would have gotten burned and it wouldn't be worth that kind of monkeying around. There were a few people that would run into those pits and they thought it was kind of silly and good thing it wasn't hot that they didn't get burned. But then I didn't want to get mixed up with any kind of.

..

RW: Were these people running resegregationists or were they just young kids. . .

JS: No, these were just some of my friends that I knew and they just overstayed the hours and then they had to get back and they had to cross the firebreak.

RW: Oh I see. They were young men having a good time.

JS: Having a good time, yeah, but then I said, they knew they wouldn't shoot, so that they thought all. .most they could do would get caught and maybe reprimanded somehow, but then they were sure they'd be let go. But I made a point and I said, 'No, I wouldn't be caught out there under any kind of circumstances.'

RW: That was wise. When did you leave Tule Lake?

JS: I left in '45, oh was it August, July or something like that. And we went to Pocatello, Idaho.

RW: In Idaho. And did you have a position or job there?

JS: No, one of my friends was over there. He wasn't a mechanic but he was doing some mechanic work and just to get over there, we just went there to his place. And then from there we went to work for a farmer right outside of Pocatello, community by name of Blackfoot. And then we worked for a farmer there to harvest potatoes.

RW: Were you among those who were restricted from going back to the coast or. . .

JS: No. we couldn't go back to the coast yet, so we harvest potatoes, alfalfa work, sugar beets. And then our friend said, 'There was a man who needs help in Twin Falls. He's got to get his potatoes in.' So we went to Twin Falls for about three-four weeks and came back to near Pocatello and we did some potatoe packing, (?) sacking. And when the release came that we could go back to the West coast, then we came back.

RW: I see. And what did you do on the West Coast?

JS: Well, I went back and what we did, my brothers, well I went to a nursery in East Oakland, San Lorenzo, at the San Lorenzo nursery and I worked there for about a year and then in 1946 because my folks were living in Sacramento in a hostel, my brother and I thought we should make a little more money and get a place for them to stay. So in '46 my brother and I went on a farm, that is to say, hit the season. And we started out with asparagus and then apricots, peach, pear, whatever and then we spent '46 up to end of December doing seasonal work and then we bought a little home for our folks. . .

RW: Oh, that's nice.

JS: . . .and then I went back to the nursery after that. In 1947, January, 1947 I went back to the nursery.

RW: And how did you come eventually to get to Illinois?

JS: Well, the nursery job was eight hours work. So I started going ot night school, taking up radio. My line was accounting, but I thought, something. .that will come in, you know. .so I started in radio, but I didn't know electricity. So I kept on going there and there was a nice teacher at that school, Hayward High School by the name of Mr. Nelson. He said he would teach me, you know, but you got to get on these things good or you don't. So I saved my money at the nursery and then I read about this coin school here in Chicago, so I wrote to them and the tuition was about \$500.00, so I saved enough money, I paid the tuition and I came to Chicago; I paid the tuition and I had \$1,800.00 to my name and I came to school.

RW: Now you are an expert electrician, is that your. . .

JS: I said I was going into television, but this electricity was so fascinating, so at this coin school they teach you how to do motor repairing, radio, but motor was so fascinating, I stuck with motor repairing and I've been in this thing for the last what '33 years and I'm on my own now.

RW: And you're married and have children?

JS: Well, I'm married and have one daughter and my wife passed away last year.

RW: Oh, I'm sorry.

JS: Kind of hectic. .but trying to get on the track again.

RW: Well, you have really. .it was almost like you have thought it all out beforehand.

JS: Well, these things live with you, it's kind of a sad thing, and yet kind of hard to forget it and go, and it sticks with you.

RW: And I myself don't think any of us should ever forget the injustice in taking a citizen. . .

JS: Yes, this is kind of hard to say this and say that. But what amazes me a lot, was that the people in the Midwest. They do not know about this.

RW: Yes, I found that out too.

JS: When I first came to Chicago, and they say we thought of Japanese ancestry was all buck-toothed and you know and this and that like they show in the comics, and they thought we were some kind of a freak. But then they say these people are a little different. The picture they got from these cartoons or whatever it is, is kind of very misleading. And they say, 'Gee, the good points come down, I wish some of this rubs

JS: off onto my kids.' And this and that, but it is hard that they thought they were all buck-toothed and kind of a freak. I said, 'How could you think in that terms when human beings are human beings.' They said that was the kind of picture they drew, so what are you going to do. But then, it's kind of hard.

RW: I was going to say that some people after I talked to them, they sometimes think of things they wished they told me, so I've developed a technique here in interviewing, even at my age, I learn. .If you don't mind I might call you back in a week or so, and just have a short talk, would that be all right?

JS: Yes. I knew you were calling, but I'm in and out; sometimes I'm hard to get hold of.

RW: I'll keep trying. I'm persistent. You know I lived in Tule Lake and I'm persistent. This was very moving and it is a beautifully organized story, and it's just one of the nicest interviews I've had. I do thank you. Okay, thank you, good bye.

JS: Good bye.

John Sawada

John Sawada is Thomas Sawada's younger brother. He now lives in Illinois.

I asked him, "When did you leave Tule Lake."

JS: I left in '45, ~~it~~ was it August, July or something like that. ~~in there.~~ And we went to Pocatello, Idaho.

RW: ~~In Idaho.~~ And did you have a position or job there?

JS: No, one of my friends was over there. He wasn't a mechanic but he was doing some mechanic work, and just to get over there, we

~~just went there to his place, you know and from there we said, we~~
went to work for a farmer right outside of Pocatello, ~~community~~

~~called Blackfoot.~~ And then we worked for a farmer there to harvest potatoes.

RW: ~~Did the...how should I say, the authorities, Were you among~~
~~those/who were restricted from going back to the coast or..~~

JS: ~~No,~~ We couldn't go back to the coast yet, so we harvest potatoes, alfalfa work, sugar beets, and then our friend said, "there was a man who needs help in Twin Falls, ~~so~~ he's got to get his potatoes in," so we went to Twin Falls for about 3-4 weeks, ~~and came back to~~ near Pocatello and ~~did some potato packing, (?) sacking.~~ And when the release came, ~~where~~ we could go back to the West coast, then we came back.

RW: I see. And what did you do on the West Coast?

JS: ~~Well,~~ I went back and what we did, my brothers, well I went to a nursery in East Oakland, San ^{Lorenzo} ~~Rolanzo~~, at the ~~San Rolanzo~~ nursery and I worked there for about a year and then in 1946 because my folks were living in Sacramento in ^a ~~hostel, you call them,~~ my

I feel grateful that I could at least speak and help / some other people. There are a lot of so-called ~~xxxxx~~ Japanese refugees out her ^{two}. They're here from Maimoto (?) and Kabushima. So these are some of the people that I'm able to help. I fell that I'm not that ~~strong~~ strong in Japanese, but at least I can carry on. . .

brother and I thought we should make a little more money and get a place for them to stay. So in '46 my brother and I went on a farm, that is to say, hit the season. And we started out with asparagus and then apricots, peach, pear, whatever and then we spent ¹⁴⁶ up to end of December doing seasonal work and then we bought a little home for our folks..

RW: ~~Oh, that's nice.~~

JS: ~~And then I went back to the nursery after that. In 1947,~~
in January, 1947 I went back to the nursery.

RW: And how did you come eventually to get to Illinois?

JS: Well, the nursery job was 8 hours work. So I started going to night school, taking up radio. My line was accounting, but I thought, something..that will come in, you know..So I started in radio. But I didn't know electricity, So I kept on going there and there was a nice teacher at that school, ~~Howard High school,~~ Hayward High School and by the name of Mr. Nelson, ^{He} said he would teach me, you know, ~~but you got to get on these things good or you don't.~~ So I saved my money at the nursery and then I read about this coin school here in Chicago, So I wrote to them and the tuition was about \$500.00. So I saved enough money, I paid the tuition, and I came to Chicago; ~~I paid the tuition~~ and I had \$1800.00 to my name and I came to school.

RW: ~~Now you are an expert electrician, is that your..~~

JS: ~~I~~ I said I was going into television, But this electricity was so fascinating, ~~So at this coin school they teach you how to do motor repairing, radio, but motor was so fascinating, I stuck with motor repairing and I've been in this thing for the last~~
~~last~~ ^{last} 33 years and I'm on my own now.

RW: And you're married and have children?

JS: Well, I'm married and have ^{one} daughter and my wife passed away last year.

RW: Oh, I'm sorry.

JS: Kind of hectic, but trying to get on the track again....

I complemented Mr. Sawada on how well he had told me his life history. He said:

~~JS:~~ Well, these things live with you, ^{so} kind of a sad things, And yet kind of hard to forget it and go, and it sticks with you. ...

RW: I myself think none of us should ever forget the injustice of taking a citizen

JS: (Interrupts)

~~JS:~~ Yes, This is kind of hard to say, ~~this and say that~~. But what amazes me a lot, was that the people in the Midwest, They do not know about this.

RW: Yes., I ~~found that out~~ too.

JS: ~~People~~ When I first came to Chicago, and they say, "We thought of Japanese ancestry was all buck-toothed and you know and this and that like they show in the comics," And they thought we were some kind of ^a freak. But then they say these people are a little different. The picture they got from these cartoons or whatever it is, is kind of very misleading.

I said, "How could you think in that terms when human beings are hman beings?" They said, "That was the kind of picture they drew." So wht are you going to do? ~~Its kind of hard, hard.~~

RW: ~~Yeah.~~

JS: ~~Yes.~~

RW: What do you remember about your life before the evacuation, what were you doing and..

JS: I was..going to ^{first} ~~last~~ year in college.

RW: First year in college.

JS: Yes.

RW: And what were your plans, let me see, what were your hopes for the future? What did you plan to be?

JS: Well, I had- all my high school was my commercial studies, that is to say, bookkeeping, accounting, and this line, and I had anticipated at that time, I loved accounting and everything so much, that I planned to go ^{on} into higher accounting jobs, you know, accounting, CPA, and this and that. This was my goal.

RW: And where were you living then?

JS: In Sacramento.

RW: In Sacramento. And how did your parents earn their living?

JS: They were on a farm.

RW: They were farmers, yes. And, let me see, I might ask now, were you born in Sacramento and what year?

JS: I was born in Sacramento in 1922. July 5, 1922.

RW: Can you tell me how you felt when you heard the government announcement that the Japanese American people were going to be ordered to leave their homes and report to the assembly centers?

JS: I remember I was at school when they posted all this thing out on the highway. You know, the highway right in front of our school there, Sacramento Junior College, and the order came out and you see

all these posters on the street. And I said, "Well, maybe I shouldn't let this thing bother me." But then things were so erratic - I never believed it, you know, but it was there.

RW: Can I just ask you - it was so..

JS: It was real disturbing. Well, it's kind of hard to concentrate with this kind of atmosphere, you know. And so, I didn't know what to do, but anyway, I said maybe I should finish and I tried to finish, but everything, the whole school itself was in a roar, too, you know what I mean?

RW: No, I'd like to hear about that.

JS: Of course, there were a lot of Japanese students in that school and everybody is just sort of giving up. And I said, "gee, I would like to finish this semester." But everything was such a hectic thing to do, that it was that it all came down to a point if you got an "A" in a class, you settled for a "B". If you got a "B", you settled for a "C". You know, it went that way and so it finally ended up that I think I left school February, March, April- about a month and a half or two months before the semester ended.

RW: Did you ever get credit for that semester?

JS: Since I did not go back in the same line of course, that is to finish accounting, I didn't even look into whether I got credit for it or not.

RW: I see. I can appreciate that too. I was going to tell you that a fair number of people ask this question - who were about your age - when it happened, that they tell me they just couldn't believe it at first.

JS: That's right. I told my brother, I said, "Paul, they'll never take us, I mean we have to go." This was my ultimate deduction, you know. "We're citizens," I said. Yes, my folks, they might have

to take, or you know, but they will never take..evacuate us from our home. This was my honest belief. As everybody around in my neighborhood sold their equipment, their household things and everything, I said, "We'll never go." So we kept everything. We didn't even bother to sell things or anything ~~and~~ until about ^{four} 4 days before evacuation. And then I told my brother, I said, "Look, gee, you know, ~~as much as~~, I'll never believe this, but it looks like we're going to have to go." And he said, "Yeah, it sure looks like it." But we didn't sell anything up to that time... a week before evacuation. When we came right down to it, I said, "Gee, it looks like they're ~~really~~ really going to pull us out." So, I said, "We'll have to do something." because, it sure looks like we ~~be going to~~ have to go. Now, on this basis we had the farm equipment and everything and the crop and everything, I said, "well, let's see what the best thing we can do?" And so, we had some good friends, Caucasian friends, and so in Sacramento if you knew, there is a man by the name of John Brunner, a furniture store, a very well-to-do man, and we knew this man from a while back through some misfortune, that is to say, my brother got into an accident and Mr. Brunner's car was one of them that got hit. And we got to know this man and my mother had purchased some appliances..gas range or something from him and she was paying for it and we got to know this man. So, a very nice man, and so my brother went to see Mr. Brunner and said "I got all this equipment I have to do something - I thought we'd never move, but we got to do something - it looks like we are going to have to go." But he said, "well, fine, wait a minute." He had a brother-in-law who lived about 3-4 miles from where we were farming and he said he needs

some equipment and said, "Maybe we could take it off your hands."
So, he said "Okay" and we contacted him and we just sold all our equipment to this man without losing any money, which was..we were fortunate. So we transferred everything to this man and we got rid of the equipment. Now, we kept the truck to the end. We said, "We'd like to ~~keep~~^{use} the truck to the end, because we have to..the owner of the land..the ranch we were farming, said, "Why don't you put all your bedding and things in my basement of ~~my~~^{this} house that he has on this farm and then lock it up." So we did all this and locked it up and everything and then the last day he came after the truck and then we.. the family that was supposed to leave about 3-4 days later, he held onto his truck too, which was sold and he had it and he took it to the Civic Auditorium, where we were suppose to congregate.

you mentioned your brother ..
RW: I see. ~~I was going to mention~~..how many brothers and sisters did you have?

JS: There are 7 brothers and sisters. There are 4 boys and 3 girls. and my folks.

RW: Where were you in this lineage, were you the second boy or...

JS: I'm the third one.

RW: You're the third, yes. I'm glad you told this story, because you're one of the few who were able to do this, as you probably know. ~~That~~ Many people lost everything they had ~~almost~~.

JS: Well, like I told my brother, "they'll never force us to go, because we're citizens!" We're citizens and no way in the world that they could force us. So it is war, yes, but we're citizens. But the picture looked real grim and the last week, I said, "Gee, you know, it sure look bad, that we might have to go." So we sort of straightened everything out in 3-4 days which was unbelievable, because we got rid of the equipment and we had some crops that were

coming out and I said, "Gee, what are we going to do with this." I think we were just going to have to leave it. And fortunately a man came and said he wants to buy the crop. So we said, "Fine." And so I don't know, my brother put some price on it and he went to the bank and he got everything settled and he sold the whole thing. We were kind of fortunate that things worked out like this. But I would never had believed that we had to leave.

RW: ~~This is..I think everyone felt that, but I'd like now to go on~~
~~a little~~ ^{To} which assembly center were you sent?

JS: Wallerga.

RW: Wallerga. ~~Let me see,~~ was there anything that happened in that assembly center, that makes you feel good today when you think about it?

JS: No. My deduction of the camp of that nature, nothing good could come out, that is to say, yes people are working, but how much work is there? Kitchen work, maintenance and they had nothing to do. No schools were set up, nothing good ^{would have} ~~is going to~~ come out, that is to say, I was old enough to figure that "No, nothing good is going to come out of this." ..at this assembly center because people were just loafing, and they had more time on their hands and I said, "Well, I have to keep busy because there is too much time."

RW: ~~I skipped one important question - I slip up now and then,~~
~~you know. Which of your experiences in the assembly center do you~~
~~recall the most strongly? What would really pop first into your head?~~

JS: In assembly center?

RW: Yes.

JS: Well, one thing that I never could get over was how was it that a citizen like us, we were born here and a citizen could be behind barb wire without..I learned in history..innocent until proven guilty. And this whole thing come true and we're behind barbed wire with

soldiers watching us from the outside. This is something that I could never believe that this country would do. And I felt, "gee, is this what they've been teaching us all this time." It really comes down to that you study history, you study the Constitution and is this what it all adds up to, they could just lift you up, take you away, and throw you in the camp like this because of my ancestry. This is really hit me hard and I said, "Well, I can't change it; I'm born. What am I going to do?" But what they'll do to you..I felt this was a real political thing and I could never get over the fact that they have such power in a time of hysteria. That they would do this kind of thing. I thought our government was a lot stronger than this all hysteria. I could never get over the fact that they would throw us behind barbed wires like this.

RW: You had done no wrong at all.

JS: That's it and they would throw us behind barbed wire and give you a number and, you know..

RW: ..like a prisoner... exactly.

JS: I thought, "Gee, now what am I to believe; whom am I to believe." These are the questions that bothered me. About the second week we were in the assembly center, we got a letter from this fellow we used to lease the land, the farm..and he said ^{body} someone broke into the building and took everything. A week - ^{ten} 10 days, you know, and I said "Gee, how rotten are the people?" I could never get over this. You're in an assembly center, military police are around guarding you - who wants to escape? You know what I mean? We have no way of getting away. And yet here's a man ^{that} ~~who~~ wrote us a letter saying that someone broke in and took all of our belongings. This was ^{three} 3 or ^{four} 4 families' belongings who were in that place and now who took it, I'll never know. Whether he sold it, ~~I'll never~~ ^{I don't} know. And these are things that come about.

It really frustrated me. I said, "Gee," you know, it's so hard to say

...

~~RW: Yes, I, excuse me.~~

JS: So, anyway these are the things that bothered me. I said, "I could never get over this." That we are behind barbed wire, I could hardly believe it.

RW: Yes.

JS: I knew there were friends outside that understood, you know. There was Mr. Pastalockwa, who was my accounting teacher at the Junior College, and he had an empty garage that we bought some things over for him to hold and he was very nice about it. We left little things like old typewriters and things like that with him and we didn't lose it or anything and he was very good about it and we claimed it after the war and this and that. He was really somebody that I said, ^u Well, ^{he} gives me a little hope, you know. And I had this kind of belief, but then I would never believed that they had uplifted us...

RW: ..and done that to you. I have a question that I hesitate to ask...~~whether there was anything that you could..the way you had to cope with it helped you, but I think you've..correct me now if you haven't answered by saying that you're one.~~ ^{was} it was still a comfort to know that there were a few people who you could rely on and.. is that so?

JS: Yes. Of course, communication from the inside - the fence to the outside was kind of nil, but then I had a high school teacher who I corresponded with him and I didn't write everyday or anything, but we corresponded. And I had another high school teacher, who was a gym teacher and I wrote to him, ^A and I had hoped that these people do understand our situation and yet they knew that it was wrong. This was wrong. That they would teach us all this up to

John Sawada #9

Born July 5, 1922
Sacramento, Calif.

← Now lives in Illinois

RW: Good morning, is this Mr. Sawada?

JS: Speaking.

RW: This is Roslie Wax, who called you I believe yesterday.

JS: Yes.

RW: If you have time to be interviewed about your life history, ^{why} ~~well~~ fine, if there are any interruptions - why, you know, we can stop and do it again. And I wondered if there were any questions that you wanted to ask me about this study I'm doing before we start.

JS: Is this in a book or anything or what? Are you writing a term paper?

RW: ~~I'm only~~, I'm 70 years old - I'm a retired professor and I was at Tule Lake for 2 years studying there.

JS: I see.

RW: I do not have to write a book. I'm only going to write a report just for the Rockefeller Foundation and I won't use anybody's real name.

JS: I see.

RW: So they are all anonymous and my object, I had some Japanese American friends and I've interviewed them and this was so interesting that I thought I would interview a few more people who were at Tule Lake.

JS: I see.

RW: My object will be to just write a report on how this affected them. What happened - so I'm getting the life history. Is that enough?

JS: Yes.

RW: Well, I'll go ahead and ask: What ^{do} you remember about your life before the evacuation?

JS: Just a minute, let me get a pen here.

Robert Ots

now and then uproot us and take us away.

RW: It was wrong. And I would say I can't find an adjective big enough, it was a dreadful injustice. That's how I feel.

JS: Yes.

RW: Well, let's see, they then..do^{id} you go / ^{from} Wallerga directly to Tule Lake?

JS: Yes.

RW: Yes. ~~And~~ then I would like to ask, you talk so well, you kind of answer my questions; I've got them outlined here. Let me see, I'll just ask it broadly this way - which of the experiences at Tule Lake do you recall the most strongly, which would you most like to tell me about?

JS: Well, now it was ..in Tule Lake, there were so many things that sort of stuck into me. That is to say, I had ^{two} ~~2~~ uncles, a cousin and about ^{two other} ~~23~~ distant cousins and my folks in the same camp. Okay, now to be kind of..to say if I wanted to go out of camp, there was a lot of opposition. You know what I mean? Because one of my other cousins wanted to go out and there was quite a commotion. You don't want to break up a family in time of that condition, you know, to have all this kind of thing going on - to break up to say I'm going to leave camp or something like that. Having all these relatives in the same camp, it was kind of hard. It was kind of hard to say, "I want to do this; I want to do that," and yet it comes about the why should I or who am I to believe now? Because when this registration came out about loyalty and this and that, I said, "Gee, you know, ^{they} ~~you~~ put us behind bars, barbed wires, and would force this kind of question on you." This bothered me. After giving a lot of thought about it, I said, "No, I'm not even going to register." I mean, this seemed ^{like} kind of

wrong and yet, I said, "They lift you right out and everything and says loyalty oath, this and that." You know that 27-28 questions whatever it was, ~~that~~ that really bothered me, so I let it go. I said "I'm not even going to register." This was the position I took and I let it go at that. Until the latter part of my camp days, one day my brother says, "Well, I'm going to leave camp." And I said, "Wait a minute, I'm going to go too then." And in order to do this you had to get clearance from security. And then this 27-28 questions come up, you got to register this and that, I said, "Well, fine." So I registered and got cleared. Of course, they had me registered with another fellow in camp by the same name, and I was on a stop list, and I had to make out a ^{two} ~~2~~ page affidavit at the camp attorney's office there and then I got cleared and my brother and I left. ~~I had~~ the loyalty question that was put on ^{us} ~~this~~, I thought it was unfair and yet, I had ^{no} ~~to~~ affiliation that I'm going to sabotage anything. It never came to my mind how I'm going to sabotage anything. They would ask these questions, you know. But then in early part of 1945; 1944-45, my brother and I left the camp.

RW: I was going to say, back to the loyalty question - from your remembrance was this feeling of ignoring it, ^{largely} ~~by~~ your own thought, your own decision or did you..were you at all influenced by your parents or relatives?

JS: No, it was no influence of this or that. After thinking it over, I said, "Gee, this is ^a ~~the~~ most unfair things for them to ask."

RW: I would agree. And you took it as your responsibility.

JS: On my own. I took it on my own and I did it. There was a fellow who was working in legal aid over there and I told him,

"Look, I'm not going to turn nothing in because I feel ^{that} this is very unfair to be this kind of question to me. You know, behind barbed wires and say this and that without even saying I'm guilty or anything, they have uplifted me from my..where I lived and we're in a camp like this, I said, it doesn't seem right that they would put this question to me. This is strictly on my own that I did it.

RW: You were a young man then and I can appreciate that. As you and I both know, there were a lot of things that happened at Tule Lake. It was a long and sometimes..well, there was the farm strike you know, and then the army rule..

JS: Yeah, tanks running through the camp there one night. ~~and~~ these are so vivid in my mind that I said I could hardly believe this. But then it did happened. That night when the tanks came rolling into the camp, some how or another I was in bed already at 8:00 and I heard this man or somebody hollering for help, and so, like a fireman I got into my..got dressed and walked outside and here I find this man ^{that} ~~who~~ lives in the next block and he had a club about ^{three} 3 feet long and running through the block and ^{he} says, "I think we killed somebody." I said, "What do you mean, you killed somebody?" Well, "These people were waiting at the warehouse, people from the other camp that was harvesting the potatoes and things, they came after food from the ice box and then were waiting there and got into a big fight." The club he had was about ^{three} 3 feet long and I said "My gosh, what do they have now, you know." But then it just happened, he went through our block, I was in block 14, and he came through there and no sooner ^{did} ~~had~~ he come through there, then we hear all this roaring and everything, and there were all these tanks coming through the firebreaks and

everything. I think they're shooting blanks, but then they're shooting. And the whole camp was up and rushing toward the administration building. Right at that point I had my younger brothers and I said, "Wait a minute, we just wait right here, we're not going to move." And let the other people..they all rushing toward the administration building, and I said, "No, we're staying right here." It sort of subsided and about an hour or hour and a half or so and I said, "My gosh, what happened?" But then we never knew, Nobody knew, you know. But then my sister, my older sister, who is a nurse, working at the hospital, she was on duty that night at the hospital and they couldn't come home, And the next morning going to work the army had put a line where the high school and the wards there, they put a barricade right through there that we couldn't cross the line no more. I think it was about 10 or 11:30 when everybody got up to the line, to disperse the crowd, they let go of some smoke bombs or whatever it was and everybody was tearing and walked back. But I had understood that maybe as much as ^{forty to fifty per} ~~40-50%~~ cent of people of the camp were in the administration area that night, and they got caught in there and they had to be more or less screened to get back. But fortunately we didn't get mix up in that and we just stayed on our side. They knew that a lot of these people were no trouble makers or anything. But then they did screen out, I don't know, about 200-250 people and kept them in a compound or something like that.

RW: In a stockade.

JS: We didn't go to work for a month or two months, something like that. I don't know and it was kind of frustrating because we were in block 14 and our neighbors were kind of hard core people and you couldn't talk. We couldn't talk to do this or do that and they would hear a lot of heresay and then they would say things.

RW: It was what?

JS: They would say things, it's all heresay, they don't know.

RW: Yeah, rumor.

JS: Things got kind of sour in our block - the nurses couldn't come home from the hospital and the military police would come with a cart to pick up her uniforms. And you could just imagine..what ^{are} ~~I stay~~ ^{they} here for?

RW: What block did you live in?

JS: Block 14.

RW: Block 14.

JS: There were nose people and I said, "No, they just came after her uniforms." So that was it. They always thought there was something else more to it and this and that. They were very nose people, they haven't got anything to do, so I guess this is the way it goes.

RW: Did you find the strike hard on you; what did you do during that period when there was no work and stuff?

JS: Well, there was nothing we could do. Of course, being a family of 9 we had 2 apartments and 4 of us boys slept in one of the apartments and we had a little..not a workshop, but we did things to keep busy. And then we twiddle around (?) ~~(?)~~ and this and that but nothing much to do and when they started to call the meetings to go back to work, I sort of even hesitated to go there because the people in our block were so, I don't know, nose people, that they would say things. I was one of the first group to go back, but I was because..

RW: You mean, to go back to work?

JS: Yes. Because I was in charge of the kitchen - there were 74 kitchens in the camp and I was in charge of the supply and they needed this and that, so I went back. I had ^{two} 2 helpers and we supplied soaps and whatever

JS: On these things, no body harrassed us or anything for going back,
though ~~so~~ our neighbor was kind of nosey, you know..

RW: You could say, you just didn't feel comfortable with the nosey neighbors.

JS: Yes, that's right. But then it was better than just loafing around everyday. Then things sort of broke loose and everybody started going back to work.

RW: Let me see, the people voted to stop the strike and they had this Coordinating Committee for a while, ~~do~~ you remember? *JS: Yes, R.H.* And then of course, I guess you were working. ~~Then there was this period I~~ I guess, I was there then and *when* I came in March of 1944 ~~after the..~~ they let me come in..the administration let me come in.

JS: There was one of my classmates in high school - she must have been a social worker or not, her name was Marjorie George, I think, and she used to..I remember her was in my *high school* class anyway, graduating class, and when we did evacuate she was at the auditorium registering or checking out registration and I think she came into camp one time. I saw her and that's about it. And there's another fellow that came in, I can't think of his name, but I saw a couple of them that came into our camp, *to* see friends, you know and that was about the extent of the people.

RW: I was going to say, there was this *very* sad and terrible thing when Mr. Okamoto got shot and then after that lots of people I was talking to they got very scared of the *imm* ~~and~~ and they said that the ~~co-op~~ was ~~the~~ Cooperative Enterprises, ~~you know~~, were grafting and taking.. do you remember that at all?

FOOTNOTE' p. 14 a

1. Listening to the tape, I conclude that Mr. Sawada is telling me that Mr. Okamoto's family were thought to be informers because they did not press charges against the authorities after Mr. Okamoto's death.
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JS: Well, I lived in block 30 before the segregation came.

Mr. Okamoto, I got to know them before we left block 30 and came to block 14. The fact that they did not press any kind of charge or whatever it is, that they ~~thought they had~~ ^{(long pause) oh -} went right along with army and the opposite end of this that they thought they were informers, you know. ¹ But what could they do? That's what I said, "We're behind wires." And there was nothing they could do. ^{I don't know what kind of} There was ~~no~~ compensation or thing they got, ~~I don't know what they got,~~ But it was a sad thing and the people said ^(that) they are with the administration. Nothing good was said, but I could feel for them that they were put in such a situation that well, we lost..from what heard of him, what could we do; we lost a brother and we can't do anything in this position. So what kind of compensation they got, I don't know either, but then they felt real bad. And on top of that to be called informers or something like that, I thought was terrible.

RW: They were called informers?

JS: Well, that's what they thought they were.

(Appalled)
RW: Oh ^{my} goodness. This ~~em~~ ^{me} calling got very, very strong a couple of weeks after Mr. Okamoto was shot and especially when the army didn't do anything and the soldier who had done the shooting, you know, was just sort of..

JS: ..taken away.

RW: taken away, yes.

JS: ..and they don't know if he was punished or what, no one knew. But then, all in all, you say, talking with my friend ^S we talk and say, "What kind of justice is that? They throw citizens, uproot them, and throw us in camp, so what could you expect." This was some of our

thinking that went on, but I said, "It's kind of hard to say, oh, they punished him or they put him in jail." Who knows how far it went - or did they? Or was he just transferred and that was it.

RW: I wondered did you remember Mr. ^{Noma}~~Hatomi~~ being murdered, you know he was the head of the Co-op? How did that affect you and your family?

JS: No, it didn't affect..well I said, "Gee, you know, he was just trying to be good and running an organization or company or store like that, to be ^sassasinated like that." It sure is something. Now I would say, ^uis there that much jealousy in our people? And now from way back when I was in high school or this and that, people would say, a partnership among Japanese people are very difficult to conduct and this was always said. I said, "Why is it?" He said, "Well, one doesn't trust the other." And this is the kind of philosophy that goes on in the Japanese group. A partnership, a Japanese partnership is never successful because one doubts the other. I said, ^uMaybe there was somebody else that wanted that kind of position." And then this happened. So I said, "Well, I don't care to be in that kind of position." But then to me what he was doing, good, bad or otherwise, I don't know. It didn't seem to affect me in that sense. I said the man was..to me he was doing a good job, but to others, I don't know.

HW: Well, when I was there, I noticed after he was murdered a lot of people got ^{even} more scared ~~to be friendly~~ to go the administration area or to show..be friendly to any ^{JS: That's true. RW} Caucasians. ^uBecause they might be called ~~and~~ ⁱⁿⁿ and everybody knew what happened.

JS: I used to go in and out of the administration building quite a bit. ^{Two-three} ~~2-3~~ times a day. And I used to pass Mr. Jacoby's office and I said, "Hello, Mr. Jacoby." Very friendly fellow, nice fellow

and then I'd go into Mr. Peck's office and get things done, and get requisitions, this and that and be done with it. I don't know, people are funny, you know. Dr. Jacoby, I had high respect for him, a very good man, I don't know, I got along with all these people. I did what I had to do.

RW: You weren't bothered..nobody called you a dog for doing that?¹

JS: No, you know, I had 74 kitchens to take care and I was busy.

RW: You were a responsible man.

JS: Yeah, so I went to each kitchen at least twice a week, you know and on the side I used to take care of the trouble they had, that is the utensils, the dishes, this and that, and I took care of it. I got along with all the kitchens. There isn't one that I say "You don't do this for me or this or that." No, I kept even keeled with every one of them and they had no problems.

RW: That ^{was} is a real contribution. That makes me feel good to hear it. I ^{was} was going to talk about something that was very dramatic when I was there - this started September, October and got much stronger during the end of 1944 - the people who wanted to be resegregated, ~~and that~~ they said, "the other people who said ^{yes, yes} ~~no, no~~" or didn't answer, we want to be put in a place where we're separate from them. And then they started their young men's organization and it got to a place where they would ^{rise} ~~(123)~~ in the morning and say "washo". Do you remember that? And I was wondering what your reaction was to that and whether that made you any trouble?

JS: No, that group of people. There were a lot of them that I knew that was in that thing, but while maybe you don't recall, but Sunday mornings, my friends that use to run food for the kitchens, Sunday mornings, 4 or 5 of us ^{that} ~~who~~ used to deliver milk, and I used to check out a truck Sunday morning and go to the warehouse and load our

truck up with milk and we went through about 3 trucks would be checked out, we went ^{through delivering} ~~and delivered~~ milk to each kitchen. These people would be running across the firebreaks and this and that. But it didn't seem to bother me. Or we should belong to there and being doing that instead of this. It never has bothered me.

RW: They never pressured you or your family?

JS: No. Of course, a lot of people said "Oh, it's good for you."

It was good, but the motives behind it was not the thing that I liked. The regimentation in that sense. This I didn't want. Because in camp we had a lot of time, and due to that fact, I took up Judo, and our hall and or the gym, the place where we practiced was in block 40. And then— there were 6-7 places where they did Judo in the camp. One in each ward. We would go to our place to ^Cpractice one night and then we would go to 3 or 4 other places to practice and I kept busy like this for oh, quite a while. I had enough exercise and everything that I said, "No, I don't need --exercise in the morning is good, but I don't need that ^{type} ~~kind~~ of regimen."

RW: Did you know Mr. ^{Kodama} ~~Kimura~~ who had the black belt? Was he one of the teachers?

JS: He was one of them. There were quite a few good teachers in that camp. I went through most of places to practice. I used to practice 4-5 nights a week. So it kept me pretty busy and I enjoyed it.

RW: I'd say, if you ~~were such a good Judo~~, you knew Judo so well, people wouldn't be incline to threaten you. You could take care of yourself.

JS: But then you know I enjoyed it and the people that I worked with, helped with, we had our own minds and we did what we had to do and stayed away from what seemed to be trouble and kept not to close with people who were always looking for trouble. I sort of stayed away from them.

RW: That sounds very sensible to me.

JS: As far as I was concerned. Right after that trouble we had with tanks, we had a curfew. The curfews were one thing, ^{I said,} I don't have to monkey around with curfew, ^{So} make sure I was home and not running around the block with a jeep chasing after you and this and that. There was a friend of mine that ^(was) always dashing across the firebreak and the jeep is after him, you know, and I said, ^{"Oh my God, what"} "What are you going to do if you get caught?" He said, "Well, what could they do to you?"

RW: Put you into the stockade.

JS: ^{yeah,} But then a few ^{young} fellows, you know, they used to have these ash pits and one fellow tells me he ran in and fell in an ash pit and he stayed in there. I said, "Gee whiz, if that was hot, what would you do?" ~~You know,~~ You would have gotten burned and it wouldn't be worth that kind of monkeying around. There were a few people ^{that} ~~would~~ running into those pits and they thought it was kind of silly and good thing it wasn't hot that they didn't get burned. But then I didn't want to get mixed up with any kind of..

RW: ~~This I didn't get.~~ Were these people running ~~and possibly getting~~ in the ash pits, were they resegregationists or were they just young kids..

JS: No, these were just some of my friends that I knew and they just overstayed the hours and then they had to get back and they had to cross the firebreak.

RW: Oh I see. They were young men having a good time.

If you don't mind I might call you back in a week or so, and just have a short talk, would that be all right?

JS: Yes. I knew you were calling, but I'm in and out; sometimes I'm hard to get hold of.

RW: I'll keep trying. I'm persistent. You know I lived in Tule Lake, ^{and} I'm persistent. This was very moving and it is a beautifully organized story, and it's just one of the nicest interviews I've had.

I do thank you. Okay, thank you, good bye.

JS: GOOD bye

END OF INTERVIEW # 334