2003

The Nishimutas: the oral history of a Japanese/Spanish family, who lived in Oklahoma from 1917

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.wp88-cypf>
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THE NISHIMUTAS: THE ORAL HISTORY
OF A JAPANESE/SPANISH FAMILY,
WHO LIVED IN OKLAHOMA FROM 1917

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Social Science

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Juli Ann Ora Nishimuta

May 2003

UMI Number: 1415726

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ABSTRACT

THE NISHIMUTAS: THE ORAL HISTORY OF A JAPANESE/SPANISH FAMILY, WHO LIVED IN OKLAHOMA FROM 1917

by Juli Ann Nishimuta

This thesis is the oral history of the Nishimutas, a multicultural family. Their father, Kutaro, was from Japan; a first generation or Issei Japanese, their mother, Louisa, was born in Spain. The children are part of the Nisei generation. Kutaro immigrated to San Francisco in 1905, subsequently, Louisa immigrated through New York in 1913. They lived in Nebraska from 1907-1916 and moved their family to Oklahoma to farm in 1917. Unlike the West Coast Japanese, the Nishimutas were not forced into the internment camps during WWII. I use interviews and archival research to explore the memories of seven siblings, ages 70-87. Beginning with their parents' immigration, I research the Depression and their struggles with prejudice during WWII. I conclude that the Nishimuta family survived hardships through their profitable farming practices and pioneer lifestyle, combined with supportive friends, and a devout Catholic faith that encouraged strong spiritual bonds.

DEDICATION

To my grandparents, Kutaro and Louisa, the first immigrants who bravely left their family and friends to cross thousands of miles and start a new life very far from home. Once they left their home countries, they never saw their families again; I think this would be an impossible heartache. To my parents, Paul and Ora, who gave me all the love a child could ask for; you two gave me the gift of reading and knowledge, along with the understanding that all races and religions are equal. I thank you both for your love and endless patience. To Father Jim and Sister Mary, who gave their entire lives and selves to humanity, you both are a spiritual example of love, friendship, and Godliness. And to all of my brothers, Michael, James, Stephen, and Gregory, who have loved and supported me all of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been written if it were not for the help and support of a few staunch teachers and friends. I would like to thank all of my teachers at San Jose City College, especially Marty Kendall, who encouraged me to keep writing, and the Women's Reentry Center, who gave me enormous support when I needed it most. I would also like to thank the many teachers of San Jose State University who encouraged me to further my education and obtain a graduate degree. Special thanks to Dr. Lois Helmbold, my advisor, friend, and mentor, coordinator of Women's Studies. I would like to thank Dr. Hien Duc Do, chair of the Social Science Department, and Dr. Wendy Ng of Asian American Studies. Finally, I would like to send many thanks to my friends, Jay Dee Barry and Nancy Looney for all their love and support throughout this project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Everyone in America will remember where they were on September 11, 2001. The news of the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York by hijacked planes was a sad and devastating blow to America and her allies. The effects of the sudden and violent attack on the United States, the loss of thousands of American lives, and the millions of dollars lost in property, were immeasurable. As a historically significant day, the comparison to the attack on Pearl Harbor over sixty years ago cannot be denied. The differences between Pearl Harbor and the attack on New York are many. But at Pearl Harbor the Americans knew right away who attacked them. The Japanese military made no secrets in the actual attack, displaying the rising sun on airplanes and warships; Japan was the enemy. In the WTC bombing it was not obvious at first who attacked us; as the evidence mounted, it became clearer.

One similarity of these two events is striking: the immediate fear that gripped innocent people in America. Whether it was Japanese Americans in 1941 or the people from the Middle East in 2001, the fear was the same. What would happen now? Would they be taken away and jailed, or worse, killed outright as traitors? In 1941, my family was very afraid for my grandfather, who had been born in Japan; they worried about what would happen to him.

In Arizona in 2001, after the September 11 bombing, an innocent man was killed by an angry vigilante. The victim was from India and wore a turban; he was shot in broad daylight in front of his gas station. He had spent some time that day looking for an

American flag to fly to demonstrate his patriotism. During WWII, 120,000 innocent Japanese Americans were forced out of their homes and put in concentration camps against their will. I am very lucky this did not happen to my family; this is their story.

Every family has a family history; as the generations reach back, a history unfolds, there is a time and a place for everyone. Every family history is a treasury of riches, there for the unfolding. Family histories can tell us, in the present, the choices and decisions made by our forebears. A family history can tell us who our ancestors were and how they lived. Then we reflect, would we have done the same? This is the story of one family, and yet it encompasses three continents. From the islands of Japan, it reaches west to the edge of Europe and Spain.

My paternal grandfather, Joseph Kutaro Nishimuta, was of the samurai class, born and raised in Japan. Kutaro, born on February 24, 1881, came to America at the age of twenty-five, sojourning with many other Japanese men. He arrived in San Francisco in the fall of 1905 and lived through the Great Earthquake of 1906. Kutaro was an Issei, the first generation of Japanese to come to America. Kutaro was a typical Issei, although he was of samurai descent and well educated. He came to America at the height of the immigration period, 1905. Only two years later the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 was signed. This agreement forbade laborers from Japan to immigrate; only businessmen or the wives of those established were allowed.

Because of immigration laws, the Issei could only immigrate to America from 1885 to 1924. The Japanese first started to immigrate to the United States through Hawaii. The Hawaiian monarchy set up agreements with the Japanese government in

1885 to allow Japanese laborers on Hawaiian sugar plantations. The immigration of the Issei to Hawaii and the Western United States lasted until 1924, a period of only thirty-nine years. America's xenophobia limited the number of European immigrants and forbade Asian immigration, resulting in the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act. This law stopped the immigration of the Japanese and was in effect until after WWII. It wasn't until 1952, with the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act, that Japanese citizens were again allowed to immigrate to America (Ichioka, 1988, p. 3).

The children of the Issei are called the Nisei, the second generation. The Nisei were generally born between 1910 and 1940 (Kitano, 1993, p. 7). This was the generation of my father and his seven siblings. This thesis is their story. They lived through the Great Depression, the miseries of Pearl Harbor, and the prejudice of WWII. I am a Sansei or third generation Japanese.

Kutaro's wife, Louisa Patricino Lorenzo, was born in Andalucia, Spain, on February 28, 1889. She was a very devout Catholic and was a postulant in a convent for seven years before she had the opportunity to come to America. Kutaro met his bride in Nebraska in 1914. They were working for the same wealthy banking family, the Hamiltons. He was a chauffeur and mechanic, she was a cook and maid and she took care of the children. They got married in Council Bluffs, Iowa on February 18, 1915. Afterwards, they moved to Oklahoma, they had eight children, and lived on various farms, raising fruit and vegetables.

When Kutaro and Louisa first married, they had to face discrimination on many different fronts. They were both fired from their jobs because Louisa's employer wanted

her to marry a white man, not a poor Japanese man. They could not get married in the state of Nebraska because of the anti-miscegenation law. Kutarō could not buy land in certain states, like California, because he was considered an alien, ineligible for citizenship, and he could not vote. These are only a few of the many social and political obstacles that this couple had to contend with. But through it all they survived and managed to raise eight very optimistic and spiritual children.

The Nishimuta family, like other Nisei families who chose farming as an occupation, had similar experiences to the truck farmers in California and Oregon. For example, they grew the same crops. The Nishimutas are unique because they were not interned during the war and stayed on their farms. Many rural Japanese did not have the strength to go back to farming after the war and took on urban work. This family was also different because they were mixed race Nisei who did not speak Japanese. However, they were similar to other Japanese families because of the importance of spirituality and religion in their lives, but they were raised Catholic because of their Spanish mother.

This research focuses on oral history interviews with the seven living children of Joseph and Louisa Nishimuta. Besides oral histories, I have used historical documents such as immigration papers, letters, newspapers, and many photographs. My goal for this project is to document the immigration of my grandmother and grandfather, to show their strength through adversity, to trace the lives of their children, and to learn from the past. I did not know my grandparents; they both passed away when I was very young; but I know them through the memories and pictures they left behind. They and their children survived many difficult years. This is also the story of a matriarchal spiritual leader, my

grandmother, Louisa Lorenzo Nishimuta. The Nishimutas' strong religious faith helped them cope and survive.

My thesis is that the Nishimuta family was an atypical Japanese American family. They were very different from most Nisei families. First, they were a multiracial family, unlike most other first generation Japanese American families. Secondly, they did not live on the West Coast where most of the Japanese settlements were and they were fortunate in that they were not put into the concentration camps during WWII. Third, they were Catholics, which is not common to Japanese American families. Their uniqueness stands out and sets them apart.

The main question that I am asking in this paper is how did the Japanese immigrants, and especially the Nishimutas, survive living in such harsh and trying times? The Great Depression and Pearl Harbor are but two of the difficult historical events that shaped the lives of the Issei and their Nisei children. Just day-to-day survival was very difficult for most new immigrants, who were at the lowest end of the social economy. It was difficult for the new immigrant Japanese to find work in America. Because they didn't speak good English, it was hard to get jobs, and they faced racial prejudice in hiring practices. They could only get low-paying, menial work. Japanese men and women worked as gardeners, domestic servants, and in shops and service industries. Domestic work was the largest employer of Japanese women before and after WWII (Glenn, 1986, p. 81). New immigrants to America have the hardest time making a living wage. The Japanese took over many of the jobs vacated by the Chinese, and today many Mexican immigrants on the West Coast have taken over the low wage jobs of the

Japanese. This work includes domestic work and agricultural work, picking and packing vegetables and fruit.

This research is very different from any previous studies on Japanese or multicultural social groups. First, there has been no previous research on any Japanese families living in the state of Oklahoma from 1917. Most of the scholarly research has focused on Japanese families living in the Pacific Coastal states, those who were put in internment camps during WWII. Because the Nishimutas lived outside the militarized zone set into effect after Pearl Harbor, they were extremely fortunate in that they did not go to the camps. Still, their lives were transformed by the outbreak of WWII.

This research is also unique because it studies multicultural identity, which has only now come to the fore-front of academia, although there have always been mixed race relationships. It was only in 1967 that racial intermarriage was allowed in many states, after the groundbreaking case of *Loving v. Virginia* tore down the old anti-miscegenation laws. Richard and Mildred Loving, an interracial couple, lived in the state of Virginia. They married in 1958, but had to be married in Washington D.C. because of the anti-miscegenation law in Virginia, which stated that interracial marriages were illegal. They returned to Virginia and in 1959 they were prosecuted and convicted of violating the state's intermarriage laws. They were sentenced to one year in jail, but the judge promised the sentence would be suspended if they agreed to leave the state and not return for twenty-five years. Forced to move, they returned to Washington D.C., where in 1963 they initiated a suit challenging the constitutionality of the anti-miscegenation

law. The Supreme Court in 1967 unanimously ruled the Virginia law unconstitutional and 16 states had to erase their anti-miscegenation laws (Matsumoto, 1993, p. 85).

As a multiracial woman, this is also a search for my own cultural self-identity. I am what Gloria Anzaldua describes as the “new mestiza.” Anzaldua says, “She lives in a pluralistic world, and has a pluralistic way of thinking” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 79). Not being a pure blood, I do not feel that I belong to a single race completely. When a stranger asks about my cultural background I say that I am one-quarter Japanese, one-quarter Spanish, and half English, with some Irish. But this is only to help people understand my parents. Blood flowing through a body cannot be divided up like a pie. I am the sum of my parts; I feel a part of these cultures, but in a way I do not feel a part of them, like an outsider looking into a secret club. My racial heritage does allow me to understand diversity, to see through many different eyes. While writing this thesis I felt many mixed emotions about the war between Japan and America. I experienced an inner conflict that was also felt by the Japanese Americans who lived during those tumultuous times.

CHAPTER II

A HISTORY OF JAPANESE AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

In the academy, previous research has concentrated on the Japanese in the Pacific Rim area, especially the states of Hawaii, California, Oregon, and Washington. The fact that Japan and the U.S. were at war from 1941 to 1945 played a large part in the history of the Japanese American experience. Much of the research has been on immigration patterns, settlement, and the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast, including the internment experience and its aftermath (Daniels, 1993, p. 16). However, in all of the vast amount of literature written about Japanese Americans, there are no books or articles written about Japanese farmers in the state of Oklahoma or in the central states. This research is groundbreaking in that respect, illustrating there was a small community of Japanese in Omaha, Nebraska in the 1910s, and several Japanese farming families throughout Oklahoma, in Jenks, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Cushing, during the 1930s. This is also the first research on a multicultural Japanese American farming family living in Oklahoma.

I have concentrated most of my research on the Japanese side of the Nishimuta family because there is a large amount of previous research on Japanese immigration. Also, there were more documents and papers from Kutaro's side of the family, as opposed to less information from Louisa's Spanish side. For example, my family has kept in touch with our relatives in Japan and have visited the family home of the Nishimutas, Izumi City, on the island of Kyushu. Unfortunately, we have lost touch with

our Spanish relatives. The patriarchal custom of inheriting male last names identified my family as Japanese along with our Asian appearances.

The peak period for European immigration to the United States was between 1880 and 1924. During this time, over 25.5 million immigrants came to America from all over Europe; many came because of famines, poverty, and war. In 1913, the year that Louisa immigrated, a total of 43,526 people came from Spain alone. The peak year for Spanish immigration was 1914 when 55,288 people came to America from Spain (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1933, p.129).

On the topic of Japanese immigration, Yuji Ichioka has written a groundbreaking book titled *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants*. Ichioka researched the immigration of the Japanese from 1885 to 1924, which is when most of the Issei came to America. The first waves of immigrants were single young men, like my grandfather, Kutaro Nishimuta. Ichioka described the immigration of the Japanese through a historical narrative, emphasizing their lack of political power. Because the Issei were classified as “aliens ineligible for citizenship”, they could not vote or own land. This made them legally powerless against organized hate groups, who did not like the Japanese. Japanese immigrants had to struggle against the exclusion movement, which wanted to exclude the Japanese from American society. The exclusionists lobbied politicians to restrict the rights of the Japanese in America.

Ichioka’s thesis is “the history of the Issei is a history of labor” (Ichioka, 1988, p. 2). The demand for cheap labor by the capitalist system required a constant input of workers. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 stopped the immigration of the Chinese to

America. This opened the door for the Japanese at a time when new industries needed many workers. Aging Chinese laborers were replaced by young Japanese men. In Hawaii the sugar and pineapple plantations needed hard workers who could cut and harvest their crops. On the mainland, the transcontinental railroad demanded cheap labor to clear land and hammer railroad ties. This was backbreaking work in the hot sun, and many white workers refused to do it. The timber and fishing industries of the Northwest also placed a demand for immigrant workers.

Recruiters were sent to Japan to hire workers and send them to America. Ichioka says, "In 1885 the Mitsui Trading Company dispatched agents to Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, and Kumamoto for recruiting purposes" (Ichioka, 1988, p. 41). Kutarō Nishimuta grew up only 60 miles from the town of Kumamoto, on the southern island of Kyushu. He must have heard that there was a demand for labor in America. At this time Japan was in a terrible economic depression, with high taxes and low wage jobs, and Japanese men could make much more money per day in America.

Between 1902 and 1907 a total of 98,429 emigrants went abroad from Japan to Hawaii and the U.S. mainland. Kutarō Nishimuta arrived in San Francisco in 1905. Immigration slowed considerably in 1907 with the signing of the Gentlemen's Agreement. This was a diplomatically negotiated agreement which did not allow laborers to immigrate; only businessmen, or those already established, could come to America (Ichioka, 1988, p. 71). The Gentlemen's Agreement allowed established workers to bring over wives and other family members. This agreement brought over

many women, allowing Japanese men to marry and start their own families in America (Kitano, 1993, p. 22).

Kutaro's immigration was not a unique case, but part of a larger immigration pattern. He chose to take advantage of the opportunity he had, as did many single, young, Japanese men, who moved east looking for a better life. They made their way through the ports of Honolulu, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle. By the time Kutaro came to America in 1905, thousands of young Japanese men before him had already made the long trip from Japan. Ichioka adds, "From 1901 to 1907, 42,457 persons were admitted to the continental United States from Japan" (Ichioka, 1988, p. 51).

When discussing the immigration of the Issei, Harry Kitano describes the push-pull model. The Japanese were pushed away from Japan by poverty, unemployment, high taxes, and the desire to avoid the draft. They were also pulled to America by jobs, better opportunities, available transportation, and a search for adventure (Kitano, 1993, p. 13). There were many different reasons why the Japanese left their homeland. Most Japanese thought that they would strike it rich in America and go back to Japan. This was called *dekasegi* immigration in Japanese; it meant leaving home empty-handed and returning home wealthy, which was what many Japanese dreamed of. Unfortunately, this was not the case, and many immigrants struggled just to survive. They wound up staying in America because they had no other choice. Most Japanese settled in the western states of California, Oregon, and Washington. There were very few Japanese living in the central states during the 1920s and 1930s.

Japanese Population by State

Source: (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1933, *Abstract of the Fifteenth Census of the United States*, p. 90, Table 35)

States	1920	1930
California	71,952	97,456
Oregon	4,151	4,958
Washington	17,387	17,837
Nebraska	80	674
Kansas	52	37
Oklahoma	67	104
Texas	449	519
Total Japanese in U.S.	111,010	138,834

When looking at the dispersion of the Japanese after immigration, we see various patterns. In 1920, there were only 80 Japanese people counted in the entire state of Nebraska. By 1930, the Japanese population of Nebraska had risen to 674. Many Japanese men moved to Nebraska because it was the main corridor and headquarters for the Union Pacific railroad, which employed many Japanese and Chinese laborers. The Japanese community in Nebraska was small, compared to the large Japanese population of San Francisco, 6,250 in 1930. A few brave Japanese individuals left the large population centers to seek their fortunes in other states which were farther inland. In 1930, there were Japanese in all the 47 states except New Hampshire, but some large cities had no Japanese residents. There were also 50 people of Spanish origin counted in

Oklahoma in 1930, including Louisa Lorenzo. Incidentally, there were also 206 Chinese individuals residing in Oklahoma in 1930, who could have worked on railroads or farms (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1933, p. 129).

Linda Tamura has written an oral history of Japanese immigrants called *The Hood River Issei* (1993). Tamura is another Sansei who has researched the history of her grandparents' generation. The Hood River Valley is located about 50 miles east of the city of Portland, Oregon. This small, fertile, valley along the banks of the Columbia River is where a community of hardy farmers settled. These Issei first came to Portland in 1890 when Japanese bachelors were working as railroad section hands. The first Japanese in the Hood River Valley were employed by the railroad to clear land and fell trees. By 1905, 600 Japanese men were employed in Hood River, clearing land. In 1908, the first Issei to purchase land was Hiyakuichi Watanuki. Soon afterwards, Japanese men were sending for brides from Japan. More and more Issei men started buying land to farm, and by 1914 the Japanese Farmer's Association of Hood River was organized. By 1941 there were 431 Japanese residents living in the Hood River Valley (Tamura, 1993, p. 70).

For Japanese families, especially on the West Coast, it was a difficult process to procure land. Some states passed laws prohibiting Japanese immigrants, who were aliens ineligible for citizenship, to purchase land. This meant that the Issei in California and Oregon could not own land in their own names. During the 1920s and 1930s, restrictive land ownership laws were passed by anti-Japanese groups; the exclusionists did not allow Asians in America their basic civil rights (U.S. Congress, Senate, 1982, p. 34).

To get around the land ownership laws, some Japanese became tenant farmers and worked land owned by Caucasians. Some Japanese had Caucasian friends who would buy the land for them. Some traded work on others' property for land that was marginal or in a swampy area. Some also bought land and put it in the name of their young children, who were American citizens by birth. However they gained the land, most Issei were very poor and had to clear unused land with hand held hoes and horse drawn plows. The Japanese in Hood River used pounds of dynamite to blow up large stumps of trees left by loggers (Tamura, 1993, p. 70).

New Japanese immigrants had many opponents in the United States. The 1920s were the height of popularity for racial hate organizations like the KKK. The exclusionists, who did not want the Japanese to stay in America, pressured state and federal officials to stop allowing the Japanese to come to the U.S. In 1924, they won a major battle that culminated in the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, which denied any person of Japanese ancestry the right to legally immigrate to the U.S. This legislation completely stopped the immigration of the Japanese (Ichioka, 1988, p. 6).

“The ban on immigration was a major victory for racists, nativists, and exclusionists, and there is little doubt that it was resented by an insulted and bewildered Japan who did not now understand this slap in the face” (Kitano, 1993, p. 20). The U.S. denied the Japanese both citizenship and immigration privileges. Kitano adds that this American legislation strengthened the hand of militarists and right wing nationalists in Japan and was a precursor to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It wasn't until after the end of WWII

and the passage of the 1952 McCarran-Walters Act that the Japanese were again allowed to immigrate.

In conclusion, there is a vast amount of research on Japanese American history, though most of the research has been on the Japanese in the Western Coastal states. The history of Japanese immigration is tied to the work that was available; most Issei were young, male laborers. They started working in the sugar cane and pineapple fields of Hawaii, and gradually came to the mainland. For the Japanese, their major employment problems were the language barrier and racism, therefore, laborers depended on Japanese contractors for work. Typical jobs for Issei were laying track and clearing land for the railroads, working in the lumber industries, mining, fishing, and farming. The Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 reduced the number of Japanese laborers who could immigrate. The exclusionists fought hard against Asian immigration and they passed restrictive land laws so that only Caucasians could own land. The anti-Japanese groups won a major victory in the 1924 Immigration Act, which stopped all Japanese from immigrating to America.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter describes the previous research on Japanese American immigrants. I will compare the studies of three major authors, specifically, the work of Yuji Ichioka from *The Issei* (1988) and Linda Tamura who wrote *The Hood River Issei* (1993), and Valerie Matsumoto who penned *Farming the Home Place* (1993) a book based on the oral history of a community of Japanese Americans who lived in Cortez, California, located in the San Joaquin Valley.

Ichioka is a historian who primarily used archival research in his book. His work was structured on extensive library holdings, archives and Japanese newspaper articles. His book has a political tone, it is very factual with many statistics. It has more of a masculine view of Japanese American life, compared to the other two books written by women. Published in the same year, both Tamura and Matsumoto use a feminist method, oral history, as their primary methodology. Their work is more personal with individuals, especially women, telling their own story. Both authors use extensive quotes in their interviews of the elderly Issei. Ichioka did state that he had a few group discussions with Issei men and women, however, not to the extent of Matsumoto who interviewed over 80 individuals from Cortez.

Another difference in these authors is the time period they researched. Ichioka limits his work to the years of 1885 to 1924 which concentrates on the very beginning of Japanese immigration and labor. Tamura and Matsumoto start with the same time period but overview the early years briefly; they extend their research up until the present time.

Similarly, their work includes the Great Depression, Pearl Harbor, the internment experience, and the return of internees to their original homes and farms.

I will examine four different themes and discuss how the authors analyzed their topics, concentrating on these subjects; Japanese marriage customs, the maintenance of the Japanese culture, the importance of religion, and the Cortez farming community.

The marriage customs of Japan were dissimilar to the American idea of marriage for love. Throughout Japanese history, arranged marriages were the proper way to meet a partner. Social standing and family ties were more important than romantic love. Many Issei immigrants found their wives through the picture bride custom, where women from Japan only met their husbands in person after they were married. The picture bride marriage was an extension of the traditional arranged marriage. For single Japanese men who immigrated and wanted a Japanese wife, the picture bride marriage was the socially correct way to find a Japanese mate.

Single Japanese men in America would send their pictures to matchmakers in Japan. The matchmakers in Japan would send the men pictures of the women. Taking into account the social status and family ranking, the matchmaker would find a potential bride. If both families agreed on the match, the couple would wed. When the couple got married in Japan, the absent husband would have a representative stand in his place at the ceremony. Only later, when the wife traveled to America, did she meet her husband. Sometimes the wife would be terribly disappointed with her real husband. Some men would send pictures of themselves when they were many years younger, and some would actually send a picture of another man who was better looking. But being dutiful wives,

many women accepted their fates with what appears today to be amazing passivity, and because they had no other choice. It was either stay in America or go back to Japan. Some women who were not happy with their new husbands would run away with other men, but this was the exception, rather than the rule. Due to social pressure running away was considered shameful.

There were several different reasons for the picture bride marriage. All three authors agree that the picture bride marriage was fundamentally a financial decision. For a man to go back to Japan to get a Japanese wife would be terribly expensive, considering travel costs for the man to and from Japan, living expenses and the price of a large wedding. It was much cheaper to have a small ceremony in Japan and have the woman come to America by herself. However, many poor Japanese laborers could not afford a picture bride because they did not have enough money to procure a wife. A man needed a savings of \$1,000 before he could summon a wife (Ichioka, 1988, p. 164-75).

Another reason for the picture bride marriage was the patriarchal structure of Japanese society. The patriarchy of their society dictated that women were inferior to men in all respects. Women had no say in who they were married to in both the traditional arranged marriage and the picture bride marriage. Tamura quoted one woman, "I do not know how I was chosen, I did not question the decision. Arranged marriages were considered proper in those days and love marriages were considered most improper" (Tamura, 1993, p. 28). Ichioka notes, "Despite changes in ideas and practices in Japan, the men clung to archaic notions, which they had learned from their fathers in the nineteenth century, about the absolute subordinate role of wives" (Ichioka, 1988, p.

172). Japanese men did have a small say in choosing a wife. One man's father sent him pictures of three different women until he found one he liked.

Ichioaka points out that the picture bride marriage custom changed the *deskagi* idea of going back to Japan rich into the idea of permanent settlement. With a wives, the men needed to find homes and settle down. The Issei started having children who required food and income for support and farming was a logical choice of occupations.

Not all Issei men married Japanese women; a few men married outside their culture. They did this because it was expensive to have a wife sent from Japan, or because they fell in love. Ichioaka says, "Wives enabled these men to enjoy a settled family life. In this way, the immigrant family unit emerged as the key social institution underlying permanent settlement" (Ichioaka, 1988, p. 164). I would agree with Ichioaka that the family unit was the most important social structure, especially on farms where families were isolated from other social institutions.

In the larger communities of Japanese farmers, both the Issei and Nisei generations were able to maintain their Japanese culture. I believe that the main reason they were able to do this was because they continued to use their native language. They also maintained their culture through intermarriage with other Japanese. Matsumoto notes that the Cortez community was a very homogenous Japanese American society. All of the Issei men married Issei women. Even their Nisei children were encouraged to marry other Japanese. One boy who dated a Mexican girl was admonished by his mother to stop dating her and marry a Japanese girl. Because of this homogeneity Japanese social and cultural values were kept intact.

Japanese traditions, including holidays, celebrations and food, also permitted the maintenance of their culture. For example, many families used the traditional Japanese bath, or *ofuro*. The whole family would wash first, then sit and soak in the hot water. The Cortez families also celebrated Japanese holidays, especially New Year's Day. They would celebrate for three days, pounding rice into a sticky dough and then making small cakes called *mochi*. They would also make traditional foods like teriyaki chicken, beans or *mame*, and sushi. They celebrated Girls' and Boys' Day, traditional Japanese holidays.

The Issei farming families needed social support systems to endure. These social systems gave them social interaction through various Japanese groups. Matsumoto states that the Cortez Issei were able to survive many hardships because of the social support systems they had. The social groups in Cortez included a Japanese language school, numerous friendship associations, and the Buddhist and Presbyterian churches. Matsumoto points out that these groups provided financial assistance and strong cultural bonds and helped new immigrants realize they were not alone (Matsumoto, 1993 p. 78).

Like the Cortez community, the Hood River Issei had many social organizations. The men had a formal social society called Kyorei Kyokai. Men participated in other social groups such as the Hiroshima Kenjikai or Hiroshima Prefectural Society, where families from the same ken, or prefecture, would get together. These people had similar dialects, rituals, and customs of food preparation. Tamura says, "In fact, a kenjin, someone from one's own ken, was regarded almost as a blood relative, despite being a stranger. Issei would be inclined to trust, assist, and conduct business with fellow kenjin" (Tamura, 1993, p. 119). The men formed the Japanese Farmers' Association of Hood

River, which helped farmers with farming practices and methods. They learned about fertilizers, vermin control, and the latest equipment available. Women also had social organizations like the Fujinkai, which was partially social and partially civic in function. The Issei used community halls to meet, have potlucks, and socialize. Like the Cortez Issei, the Hood River Issei also observed traditional Japanese holidays, such as New Year's Day, Girls Day (March 3), and the Emperor's birthday (April 29) (Tamura, 1993 p. 133).

Religion was important to Japanese immigrants. Most Japanese were raised as Buddhists and were very spiritual people, praying to their ancestors twice a day. This kind of moral understanding carried over into the Christian religion, and many Japanese became eager converts to Christianity. Both Buddhists and Christians believed in compassion for their fellow man. They both believed that stealing and sexual immorality were wrong. Both religions respected and emulated the teachings of a great spiritual leader who taught kindness, had infinite love for others, and lived by moral truths. Both Christianity and Buddhism are faith-based religions, whose precepts are that good works in this life will lead to happiness and everlasting life, even after death.

As early as 1875 there were several Protestant missions for the Japanese in the city of San Francisco. Ichioka notes, "The roots of Japanese society (in America) go back to the establishment of Christian institutions" (Ichioka, 1988, p. 16). Ichioka mentions the various Protestant missions in San Francisco and Northern California and the early role of the church for new immigrants. These missions provided housing and English language classes to many single Issei men. Matsumoto adds, "Many Japanese

converted to Christianity soon after arrival in the U.S., having found fellowship and orientation in the churches and meeting places established by missionaries for new immigrants” (Matsumoto, 1993, p. 51).

The difference between Ichioka’s research verses Tamura and Matsumoto is that Ichioka does not delve into the role of the churches in the larger Japanese farming communities, perhaps because it took many years after 1924 to establish permanent settlements outside the cities. Before 1924 many Japanese laborers were travelling around the country, working along the way. Matsumoto and Tamura have very extensive discussions on the social and cultural role of churches during the 30s and 40s.

Matsumoto notes that the two major churches in Cortez were the Buddhist and the Presbyterian Church. In Cortez, the Buddhists did not have a church building until just before World War II; before then, they would meet once a month at someone’s house. They would celebrate Buddha’s birthday with a special service. The Buddhists would also have a small Obon festival on August 15, a day to remember deceased relatives which included prayer and traditional dancing. The Presbyterians had a regular church building and had a service every week. They had prayer meetings in Japanese and an English-language Sunday school where they celebrated Christian holidays. This provided social occasions for families on isolated farms, which helped create friendship and support systems (Matsumoto, 1993, p. 77).

The Hood River community in Oregon was quite similar to the Cortez community of California. They were both very large communities, with family farms spread out over a central area. Like the Cortez community, the residents of Hood River established a

Buddhist Church and a Japanese language school. In Cortez, the Christians belonged to the Presbyterian Church, and in Hood River they had a large Methodist Church (Tamura, 1993, p. 125).

Both Ichioka and Matsumoto discuss the Cortez colony. The Cortez Colony was founded in 1906 by a man named Abiko Kyutaro, a wealthy Japanese entrepreneur who started out running a Japanese newspaper. Abiko, who learned to speak and write English, was a pioneer in the area of permanent settlement. “Abiko believed that Japanese laborers were ideally suited to take up farming” (Ichioka, 1988, p.148). He encouraged single men to marry Japanese women and buy land to farm.

Matsumoto, compared to Ichioka, had more in depth research of the Cortez colony. She explains, “By 1940 there were 600 Japanese residents living in the three Abiko Colonies of Cortez.” The Cortez farmers grew crops such as strawberries, eggplant, squash, onions, and carrots. These crops were known as truck crops, or truck farming, because the produce was taken directly to the market in the family truck (Matsumoto, 1993, p. 46). Later on, the Cortez colonists grew grapes, but vines took three or four years to mature and produce a grape crop.

Strawberries were one of the most labor-intensive crops grown by the Cortez Issei. These plants had to be hand picked and packed, without damaging the delicate fruit. The weeding and tending of the land had to be carefully done by hand. The Cortez colony, during the early and lean years, supplemented their diet by hunting rabbits. In Cortez, there was a sexual division of labor, with cooking, laundry, and ironing reserved for the women and girls.

The Abiko and Hood River colonies are important to the history of Japanese Americans. These communities represent success stories of farming families who returned to their land even after internment during WWII. They are a testament to the strength and endurance of the Japanese in America.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODS

Previous studies of Japanese farmers and Japanese farming communities have used oral history as a research methodology, to get a more personal view of history and to allow minorities' voices to be heard. This study considers only one family, but we can put it into perspective by comparing this family to other Japanese farmers who lived at the same time in other parts of the country.

Oral history is a feminist method because it allows the participants to speak for themselves. Interview research also allows for free interaction between the researcher and the participant. As Reinharz says, "Open-ended interview research explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory." The subjects in this study are not mainstream because women's and minorities' voices are heard. The larger historical record has not taken into account the role of the working class, the poor, and Asian immigrants. Reinharz adds, "Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher" (Reinharz, 1992, p.19).

To gather data for this study, I interviewed, either in person or by telephone, the seven living children of Kutaro and Louisa Nishimuta, who now range in age from 70 to 87 years old. Sadly, I was unable to interview Sister Mary, a Catholic Marynoll Sister who dedicated her life to God, keeping her vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. She passed away in 1994, the result of a sudden heart attack. Mary, like most of the other children, was very interested in her family lineage and did her own research on her

parents. With the assistance of a friend, who wrote a letter in Spanish to the convent where her mother had lived, Mary acquired the baptismal record of her mother, who was born in Andalucia, Spain (Letter from the Sisters of the Presentation, Granada, Spain, 1987).

All of the eight Nishimutas are Nisei, the second generation Japanese Americans. They now live in the states of California, Texas, Oklahoma, and Nebraska, with the exception of Father Jim, a semi-retired Catholic priest with a congregation in Sapporo, Japan, who spends summers in Oklahoma and travels back and forth to Japan. He has lived in Japan most of his life and speaks excellent Japanese. He has been a great resource, having visited the Nishimuta family home in Kyushu.

My interviews consisted of thirty-two open-ended questions. The interviews lasted from one to three hours and were audio taped, and I had some of the interviews transcribed. The questions I asked were about the early lives of the Nishimuta children and their memories of their mother and father. I asked them questions about growing up on the farm, their chores, and social events. I probed their memories of the Depression, Pearl Harbor day, and their war experiences. They talked about the prejudice they experienced and how it affected their views of themselves and their parents. I asked about the role of religion in their lives, as members of the Catholic faith. I also asked them about how being a multicultural person has influenced their lives. All oral history questions are listed in Appendix A.

The purpose of this research is to find out how the Nishimutas survived such difficult times as a Japanese American multicultural family. How did their parents leave

their entire families and friends behind to go to a strange and new country with a different culture and language? How did the young family survive poverty? When other families were leaving Oklahoma in droves during the Great Depression, the Nishimutas stayed and worked the land to their benefit, and they are still there today, farming the soil. How did they do it? What helped or hindered their existence as a family?

Kutaro Nishimuta kept several diaries, one in 1907-1908, and another in 1914. There may have been another diary written between these two dates that got lost. The dairies were hand written by Kutaro in his native language, Japanese. His daughter, Sister Mary, had the diaries translated into English by a friend. I have included a copy of the diaries in translation in Appendix B. Kutaro did not write a voluminous amount, but kept a pretty good record of his daily activities. He also kept track of his daily expenses, which is quite interesting. I have included the high points of his record.

As a researcher I very much enjoyed the interview process, I was quite surprised at the willingness of the participants to share their memories and reflections. I feel that some of the participants had not talked about their early years in a long time and that they also enjoyed reminiscing back to their days growing up on the farm. While doing this project, I discovered the excitement of oral history as a research method. The participants, at any time, can reveal previously unexplored ideas. Interview research allows the interviewer to take any path that opens during an interview and follow it through to its ending. The benefit of personal interaction, as opposed to a written, questionnaire type of study, makes this research more alive and interesting. I also learned more about myself and my own family history.

CHAPTER V

KUTARO NISHIMUTA

Kutaro Nishimuta is a sixth generation descendant of the Samurai Manzaemon Tateno. Manzaemon lived in the 1600s and is listed in the samurai histories of Japan. The Tateno family home in Japan still has a samurai warrior breastplate and battle helmet from the 1600s. They also have the samurai family sword, the soul of the warrior. Father Jim said, “The sword is so sharp and dangerous that it has to be registered with the authorities as a lethal weapon” (Father Jim, interview, August, 1998).

Kutaro (Tateno) Nishimuta was born on February 24, 1881, in Izumi City, Kagoshima, on the southern island of Kyushu, Japan. Kutaro was the son of Kyuzemon Tateno and Yae Idenoue. As the custom was, at his birth his umbilical cord was saved on rice paper. On this was inscribed his name and time of birth, 6 p.m. His family in Japan saved this cord until long after Kutaro died, and years later proudly gave it to his American daughter, Margaret Cavnar. Kutaro was the fifth of six children; when Kutaro was born, his oldest brother Kijiroo was 14, and the next youngest son, Kitinosuke was seven. Kutaro had two sisters, Tsurugame was ten, and Sue was five. Five years after Kutaro, another brother, Kutsusake was born (Michael Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Kutaro was raised in Izumi City, which is near the sea. Traditional occupations for the men were fishing and farming; they grew rice and other vegetables. Izumi City is 30 miles from Kagoshima, the prefectural capital. Kutaro grew up a well-educated young man; he began primary school at the age of nine, later attended the Meiji Gikae School in

Kagoshima, and went on to high school in Tokyo. In 1894, when Kutaro was 13, an army of Japanese soldiers invaded Korea, because Japan was trying to take Korea from China. When Kutaro was 19, he received his first draft notice. Kutaro was 20 when he received a conscription notice to join the army. He was still in high school in Tokyo and got a deferment as a student, so he did not have to join. In 1903 Kutaro graduated from high school at the age of 22. In 1904 Japan started a war with Russia. A letter, written in Japanese, dated February 28, 1905, signed by “Kutaro Nishimuta, of Samurai descent, Izumi, Kagoshima, to the conscription officer of Kagoshima” stated that Kutaro was a student in college and therefore requested that he should be allowed to continue his studies and not join the military (Michael Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

On May 7, 1904, Kutaro formally changed his family name from Tatenos to Nishimuta. This was an old Japanese tradition. Tamura says, “Continuing the family name, its lineage, and its traditions was of prime importance in Japan. Families without sons therefore acquired male heirs through simple adoption. The adopted son perpetuated the family line, and was called a *yoshi*” (Tamura, 1993, p. 108).

Kutaro was a *yoshi*, because he adopted the Nishimuta name, but he did not go to live with the Nishimutas. Uncle Frank said, “One of Kutaro’s older brothers bought the name for Kutaro. His brother wanted Kutaro to have a samurai name and presented the name to Kutaro as a gift, it was a great honor to have a samurai name.” Kutaro stayed very close to his birth family, the Tatenos, he wrote them and sent them pictures throughout his life. Kutaro was very generous and caring because he changed his name so a family without sons could keep their name alive. Sometimes a *yoshi* married into

the adopted family, marrying the eldest daughter. Kutarō did not marry in Japan but waited until he came to America. Kutarō was very successful in keeping the Nishimuta name alive because he had five sons and many grandchildren.

In describing the Nishimuta surname, Father Jim said, “The Nishimuta name is a very old Japanese name” (Father Jim, interview, August, 1998). In translation, *Nishi* means west, or western, and *muta* means rice field. So Nishimuta means a rice field in the west. Izumi City, where Kutarō was born, is on the western side of the island of Kyushu. Nishi is also a place name in Japan. Today, the Nishimuta name is an old and unusual Japanese name, even to the modern Japanese. A more common Japanese name is Nishimoto.

It is unclear why Kutarō decided to come to America, but the evidence suggests several explanations. He was going to be drafted into the army and perhaps he did not want to die for his country; he could have been opposed to wars and violence. There was a severe financial depression in Japan at the time, with inflation and high taxes. Many people lost their farms and family businesses. Maybe Kutarō thought he could do better financially in America because of the great need for labor. During this time, there were guide books to America written by the Japanese, encouraging them to come to the United States, such as, “How to Go to America Alone: A Guide to San Francisco,” written in 1886 (Ichioka, 1988, p. 62). Before he left Japan, Kutarō knew that there were jobs in America for Japanese men.

It would take Kutaro a long time to make his dream of coming to America a reality. His passport was issued on July 5, 1905, when he left Yokohama for San Francisco. The ship probably stopped in Honolulu, Hawaii, for fuel and supplies. It took 2 weeks to travel by sea from Japan to the West Coast of America (Glenn, 1993, p. 37). Unfortunately, when he arrived at Angel Island, in San Francisco, Kutaro did not pass the physical exam. He was too sick to be allowed to stay in America. So he had to get back on the ship and go all the way back to Japan. It must have been very disappointing for him to be so close to his destination, to have to turn around and leave. But he was a very determined, strong, and independent young man.

On September 23, 1905, he left Yokohama and again made the long sea voyage to San Francisco. Father Jim said, "He brought with him cases of oranges to eat along the way" (Father James Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998). In this manner, he was able to get the vitamins and extra nourishment he needed. When Kutaro was examined again, he passed the physical. From then on he officially became an alien, ineligible for citizenship. He started a whole new life in a new country, with a new culture and a new language. In 1905, the year that Kutaro immigrated, 10,330 other Japanese also immigrated to the United States. The peak year for Japanese immigration was 1907, when a total of 30,226 came to America (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1933, p. 107).

In 1905, San Francisco was a large, bustling, city. There were Japanese hotels where young men could stay, complete with Japanese cooks and food. A typical Japanese diet consisted of white rice, fish, sea urchins, and fresh vegetables; beef was rarely eaten in Japan. In Chinatown there were Asian markets, where preferred food, like

rice, fish, and pork, could be found. There were many Japanese pool halls, bars, and gambling establishments. There were also Chinese opium dens and many female prostitutes (Yung, 1995, p. 28). Kutarō could easily find a Japanese hotel, and there were many Japanese employers who were looking for contract laborers.

From Kutarō's diary, we know that he took English language classes from an Episcopal Mission, likely at the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Mission, located at 531 Jessie Street, below Market Street, between 6th and 7th Streets, an area where many Japanese students and laborers rented rooms (Ichioka, 1988, p. 18).

It was during this time that Kutarō adopted the English first name of "Joseph." Ichioka states that Americans gave new Japanese immigrants English names because they thought their Japanese names were too hard to pronounce. Ichioka adds, "Names like Frank or Joseph were neutral, but 'Charlie' had strong condescending overtones" (Ichioka, 1988, p. 26). Kutarō also dropped the "y" from his birth name of Kyutarō. His legal name became Joseph Kutarō Nishimuta.

On New Year's eve, 1906, Kutarō, "went out to eat and drink, got home at 4 a.m." On Wednesday April 18th, Kutarō was jolted awake. It was 5:12 in the morning, his room was shaking, and the walls were moving. It was a massive earthquake, the largest ever to be felt in the continental United States. The San Andreas Fault was moving over twenty feet in some places. The earthquake registered 8.3 on the Richter scale and lasted a full minute. Within 15 minutes of the quake, 50 fires had started in the city of San Francisco. The fires were started by overturned stoves, broken gas mains, and damaged

electrical wires. Unfortunately, the city did not have the capacity to put the fires out. Water was pumped from the bay in a futile attempt to douse the raging firestorm.

After the earthquake, many people fled to the safety of Golden Gate Park and other open areas, away from the flames. Some 250,000 people were immediately homeless; Kutarō was probably one of them. Many people camped in the parks during the rebuilding of the city. When it was all over, four square miles of downtown San Francisco had been destroyed. The entire business, financial, and most major residential districts were gone; 28,000 buildings were ruined. The U.S. Navy, three days later, finally used dynamite on buildings to create fire breaks (Thomas, 1971, p. 51). San Francisco was anti-Japanese before the big earthquake, and the difficulties surrounding the destruction flared tempers. Ichioka says, “Many anti-Japanese outbursts occurred after the disastrous earthquake of 1906” (Ichioka, 1988, p. 68). Perhaps that’s why Kutarō did not stay in California.

After the earthquake, Kutarō stayed in a boarding house in San Francisco; he rented a room for \$3.00 a month. He was working at the time, but does not state where he was employed. He did get home at 4 p.m. each day after work. Kutarō was also taking English classes at the Episcopal Church Mission, he went to church regularly and read the Bible. He bought an English book for 75 cents and a watch for \$1.50. He had a Japanese friend named Fujimoto, who attended the same church. Kutarō went to the Japanese section of town to take a bath, probably in a public bathhouse, for 20 cents. Kutarō went to the dentist frequently, he also had to go to the Japanese consul to get a certificate to live in the United States. Kutarō wrote his brothers in Japan, and when he

was able to save money, he sent money to his older brother, Kiemon Madarame, who had paid for Kutaro's education. One of Kutaro's entries reads, "February 15, 1907, Japanese holiday, went to the beach, received a letter and pictures from younger brother in Japan, was treated to a Chinese meal, haircut 25 cents, salary, 3 yen." It appears that Kutaro was working for a small Japanese business, because they gave him the day off for a Japanese holiday and also because he was paid in yen (Diary of K. N.).

In March of 1907, Kutaro decided to move to Omaha, Nebraska. I believe that Kutaro's friend, Fujimoto, helped convince Kutaro to move. Fujimoto went to Nebraska first and met Kutaro when he arrived. There was a small community of Japanese in Omaha during the early 1900s, and they had established a Japanese hotel and bathhouse. Kutaro's plan was to work his way to Omaha on the railroads. Omaha was the home office of the Union Pacific Railroad Company.

At the turn of the century, many Japanese worked alongside the Chinese as the railroads were being built. The hard and tedious manual labor of laying track was a job that few wanted. Ichioka says that railroad work was the biggest employment opportunity for new Japanese (Ichioka, 1988, p. 57). For new immigrants who did not speak English and were not familiar with American customs, other Japanese workers and employers helped them find work. The Japanese railroad contractors would sometimes provide rice and other culturally familiar foods to the men who worked. It was hard living and the men either slept in the railroad cars or out in the desert.

In early March of 1907, Kutaro had a farewell party in San Francisco. On March 9, at 7:30 a.m., he got on a train headed for Nebraska. He went over the Sierra Nevada

mountains and wrote, "The snow was very deep." On March 14, he started working for the railroad company. March 28 he wrote, "Trouble on the railroad, no work for two days." Kutarō worked for 13 days and 7 hours and received wages of \$19.93. When there were train wrecks, Kutarō worked at the wreck sites. He sometimes worked 10 and 11-hour days, but got paid for overtime and had Sundays off. Kutarō usually started work at 5 a.m. During his leisure time, Kutarō smoked; he rolled his own cigarettes when tobacco cost 5 cents a bag. Kutarō kept up his correspondence with his friend in Omaha, Fujimoto (Diary of K. N.).

On April 10, he went through Salt Lake City, Utah. On April 17, he was in Promontory Point, Utah, where the transcontinental railroad joined the eastern railroad to the west. Kutarō bought food and postcards from the railroad company store, and paid them back when he got paid; later he attended a play for 20 cents. At the end of April, Kutarō was in Ogden, Utah; he treated his friends to dinner for 45 cents. Kutarō also had stomach problems and bought some stomach medicine. Once he had to go to the railroad company hospital. At the end of April, Kutarō received \$35.00 in wages.

Kutarō's diary states that on May 2, he crossed the Rocky Mountains, and the next day, May 3, 1907, he finally reached his destination, Omaha, Nebraska. His friend Fujimoto met Kutarō at the railway station. While he was staying in Omaha, Kutarō lived at the Omaha Hotel. While he was in town, Kutarō bought a pair of new shoes for \$3.00, gloves for \$1.00 and an undershirt for 90 cents.

According to Tamura, "Japanese railroad section hands earned about a dollar a day." Many Japanese laborers worked for \$1.50 to \$2.25 a day, but "these wages were almost

double the meager salaries they might have earned in Japan” (Tamura, 1993, p. 63). We can see that Kutaro was earning the average pay for a Japanese railroad worker, but he was at the low end of the pay scale, making only about \$1.50 for a day’s work. Kutaro was trying very hard to save his earnings. He spent little money on himself, and used most of his money to pay back his brother, who had paid for his education. He was also repaying his friend Fujimoto (Diary of K. N.).

Kutaro’s diary of 1907 continued to document his daily activities. On Sunday, May 5, he rested, and then later went to a play, which cost him 50 cents admission. During the week, he resumed his work for the railroad company; he left Omaha to work along the railroad. On May 12, he reports, “Strong winds, day off.” During his leisure time, Kutaro wrote to his family in Kyushu, to the Episcopal Church in San Francisco, and to his friends often. On his day off, Kutaro wrote that he did his laundry and bought eggs, which cost 15 cents.

Kutaro worked very hard and must have had a lot of endurance to work so many hours outside. He reported that he worked three hours of overtime and received a half day’s wages for it; he worked overtime often. He continued to document his expenses. Kutaro wrote in his diary that he bought a pipe and matches. He had his watch repaired for 30 cents and bought a new watch chain for 5 cents. Kutaro bought fish hooks and a fishing pole for 29 cents and went fishing with his friends. Kutaro got the day off when it rained; in June he reported, “A storm with lightning and thunder.” Kutaro wrote that he bought underclothes, stockings, a shirt, and leggings. He got a hat for 10 cents and a

bottle of whiskey for 75 cents. Kutaro drank some alcohol now and then, but not every day. Kutaro wrote that he received a letter from his oldest brother, Kiemon Madarame.

During June, Kutaro worked on the railroad and traveled back to Omaha. When he arrived in Omaha, he enjoyed himself with sake and meat which cost a total of \$2.50. July 4, 1907, was Independence Day, a holiday, and Kutaro had the day off; to celebrate, he went to Beaver Park for the day. Kutaro continued to correspond with his family in Japan. For the second time, Kutaro left Omaha to work on the railroad. Kutaro worked very hard on the railroad and tried to save his money. Working on the railroad was very difficult and laborious work; he worked outside in the hot sun all day and worked on Sunday for overtime. His salary for the month of July was \$43.00.

On August 1, 1907, Kutaro wrote, "Had trouble with the foreman, so didn't work until the end of the term, was changed to another gang" (Diary of K. N.). Ichioka's research reveals that some white railroad foremen were prejudiced against the Japanese laborers and did not treat them fairly (Ichioka, 1988, p. 74). This may have been the reason he got changed to another gang.

Kutaro wrote that he sent his friend Fujimoto \$100; it cost 40 cents to send it. Kutaro was not working one day and a train went off the track, so he was sent back to work; he was working 11 hours a day. Kutaro bought a Japanese treat, pickled plums, for 25 cents. Kutaro continued to send and receive letters from his family in Japan. He noted in 1907 the first time he ate in a restaurant. Kutaro worked on more train wrecks and worked all night, but he received overtime for it. For recreation he played pool with his friends; Kutaro wrote that he loaned a friend \$10 (Diary of K. N.). Kutaro's salary

for the entire month of August was \$42.00; of that money he sent 109 yen to his older brother in Japan. Kutarō's expenses for August were shoes, \$2.50, an overshirt for \$1.00, and underwear for \$1.00. His friend Fujimoto came over for a visit and Kutarō bought beer for five cents.

Kutarō continued to work overtime, he changed work gangs and worked for the Covington gang. He writes of another train wreck in Covington, Nebraska. Covington was the farthest eastern point that Kutarō traveled to while he was working on the railroad. Covington was a small railroad town in the Northeast part of Nebraska. It was located on the Missouri River directly across from Sioux City, Iowa. When Kutarō left Covington, he turned around and traveled southwest back to Omaha (Diary of K. N.).

On September 21, 1907, Kutarō reported, "First frost." His total salary for September, 1907, was \$52.00. The railroad company store took \$4.18 for food. Kutarō noted he bought a shirt and collar for \$1.25. Sometime between September and October Kutarō took the train back to Omaha. In October he was staying at a Japanese hotel in Omaha, the Morihama. When Kutarō got back to Omaha he visited his friend Fujimoto. Kutarō went to the Armour Canning Company to look for a job, and they promised him one. Kutarō was very generous and donated 25 cents to the building of a church. He was working 11 hours a day at the Armour Canning Company. With his salary, Kutarō bought a songbook and gum and went to the movies; his salary for 2 weeks was \$22.00.

On November 3, 1907 he wrote, "Emperor's birthday, bought a case of sweet wine, celebrated in south Omaha with Japanese friends by eating, drinking beer, singing and dancing" (Diary of K. N.). Later in November he wrote, "No work, went home

depressed.” He said he went to the theater for 20 cents, rode the trolley and bought a book for 12 cents, he also bought beer and played pool. On November 10, 1907 he reported, “First snow.” When a Japanese friend of Kutaro’s died, Kutaro went to the funeral and bought incense for the wake. After working for two weeks at the canning company, he received \$12.25, he also got back pay. On Thanksgiving Day, 1907, Kutaro got the day off, and he bought sweets for ten cents. Kutaro worked hard but still spent a small amount of money on entertainment and enjoyment; he liked playing pool and going to the theater.

In December Kutaro continued to work at the Armour Canning Company. On Christmas Eve, 1907, he sent cards to his Japanese family and friends. He sent his brother \$51.00 and paid the company store \$13.75 for food. For Christmas Day, 1907, he went to a friend’s house. Later on he bought an apple, gum, paper to paint on and envelopes. On New Year’s Eve, 1907, Kutaro wrote that he took a bath at the public bathhouse for 25 cents. After his bath, Kutaro took himself out to dinner, dined on chop suey and then attended the theater (Diary of K. N.).

Kutaro saved up \$131.73 for the year of 1907. After he paid his debts, he had \$109.73 left for a year’s work. This was a lot of money in those days. Kutaro could have bought a good used car for that amount of money. Kutaro worked hard and kept track of every penny he spent. He was very thrifty in saving his money. Margaret said, “My father never bought anything he didn’t have the money for. He never used credit cards and always paid his own way” (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998). Many

of the children of Kutaro and Louisa are also thrifty; they saved their hard-earned money and have done very well for themselves, coming from such poor beginnings.

Kutaro Nishimuta only had one entry in his diary for 1908, it was May 11. He was still living in Omaha, and he was working, but he doesn't say where. He writes, "I got up at 6:00 a.m., (ate) breakfast and did housecleaning. At night I took a walk for a little while. I worked as usual during the day, at night studied a little, and went to bed. I was up earlier than usual, but there were not many things to do, so I could study for many hours and at night learned English from Mrs. Nichol." Another entry reads, "I am not working as much as I would like to, at night we had a good time with the girls. I drew my picture before noon, and after noon I went downtown with Mrs. Miller to get groceries" (Diary of K. N.). He was rooming with Miss Ada Miller in 1908, at 2709 Farnam Street, Omaha. It was the first time he roomed with an American woman.

Between 1908 and 1910 Kutaro Nishimuta made a very important career decision. Perhaps because he could not find enough work, Kutaro decided to go to college. He wanted to learn about the latest invention of the time, the automobile. He attended the Northwest Auto School in Omaha. Because the automobile was a very new invention, he not only had to learn how to drive a car, but he also had to learn how to repair it, in case it broke down, which happened very often in those days.

The Auto School gave Kutaro a letter of recommendation after he graduated. Dated June 29, 1910, written on the letterhead stationery of Omaha Commercial College (Letter of Recommendation for Kutaro Nishimuta, Omaha College, 1910), it stated,

To whom it may concern:

This is to certify that Mr. Kutaro Nishimuta has completed the course in the Northwestern Automobile School standing above the average with his grades and in his driving and handling of the automobile on the streets of our city and we cheerfully recommend him and are confident he will prove satisfactory to anyone who will give him a reasonable chance with their car.

Very Respectfully,
N.W. Auto School

With this letter in hand, Kutaro began to look for work as a chauffeur. He gained employment with a wealthy banking family, the Hamiltons, and chauffeured Mr. Frank G. Hamilton, President of the United States National Bank, Omaha Branch. As we can see, Kutaro was a smart, resourceful, man. He was a hard working man who was willing to work many long hours of overtime. He was obviously trying to get ahead; by going to school he hoped to get a better paying job as a chauffeur, rather than the minimum wage he received doing manual labor for the railroad company.

CHAPTER VI

LOUISA PATROCINIO LORENZO

Eloisa Patrocinio Adoracion Lorenzo was born in the small village of Lucar, Spain, on February 28, 1889, almost eight years after Kutaro. Lucar is located in the mountains, in the southernmost region called Andalusia, near Seville and about 70 miles east of Granada. Present at Louisa's baptism were her mother, Rafaela Castillo Encinas, and her father, Casiano Eges Lorenzo, her paternal grandfather, Jose Requeno Lorenzo, and her paternal grandmother, Maria Luisa Eges Romero, and her maternal grandparents, Josefa Garcia Castillo and Jose Acosta Encinas (Baptismal record of Louisa Lorenzo, March 3, 1889).

All of the grandparents were “from this village,” according to the baptismal record. Her family on both sides probably lived in that area for generations. This part of Spain was a very poor area; some villages had to get water from wells until the 1970s. This area has a Mediterranean climate, very dry and hot in the summer, with cool, wet winters. It has fine weather to grow grapes for wine, olives, and fruit. It also has nice weather for sheep, cattle, and other livestock. The baptismal certificate states that Louisa’s father was a laborer. Perhaps he worked in the fields, picking fruit and vegetables.

Louisa Lorenzo was a petite woman, only 5’ 2” tall. She had the classic looks of a Spanish woman, beautiful long brunette hair, an olive complexion, and dark brown eyes. Her photograph reveals a quiet, deep, and thoughtful person. She loved children and animals. But above all, she was very religious. She would become the spiritual

matriarch of the Nishimuta family. When she was younger, Louisa wanted to be a nun. On November 21, 1907 at the age of 18, she professed her first vows to God in her village church at Lucar. In 1910, at the age of 21, she left the congregation and the village of Lucar. She went about 20 miles northwest, to the city of Baza, to join an abbey (Letter from the Sisters of Presentation, Granada, Spain, 1987).

Her daughter, Margaret, remembered her mother talking about a statue of the Virgin Mother as a child. This statue was in the village church where Louisa grew up; it must have made a lasting impression on her. Louisa Patricinio Lorenzo was a postulant at the convent in Baza for three years. During that time she attended mass, prayed, and learned about the sacraments of the Catholic Church. She maintained a very strong faith in Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. She also learned to read and write Spanish. Louisa kept her faith throughout her life. She remained a postulant for a total of six years. Although Louisa was a very devout Catholic, sometime during her years at the convent, she decided that she did not want to become a nun.

The Mother Superior of the convent had a sister, Louise Hamilton, who had married an American banker, Mr. Frank G. Hamilton. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton lived in Omaha, Nebraska and had a 5 year-old daughter. Because the daughter was half-Spanish, the mother wanted her daughter to learn the Spanish language. Mrs. Hamilton and her family were visiting her sister in Spain and asked if she knew a young woman who could teach her daughter Spanish and work as a housekeeper and a cook. The mother superior asked Louisa if she would be interested in the job. Louisa accepted, and the Hamiltons paid for her passage from Spain to France and on to New York and finally, Omaha. A family

friend of the Nishimutas, Mary Oshimo, said that Mrs. Hamilton was a countess from Spain. Frank, Louisa's second oldest son said, "They wanted their daughter to speak Spanish so they brought my mother over and that was her job, to tutor this daughter" (Frank Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998). Louisa had the opportunity to go to a different country with a new language and a completely different culture. It must have been a tough decision to have to leave all her family and friends. Louisa accepted the Hamiltons' offer and soon they were travelling from Spain to France.

The Ellis Island passenger manifest shows that Patrocinio Lorenzo, age 24, arrived in New York in 1913, aboard the ship the Nieuw Amsterdam. The original home port for the Nieuw Amsterdam was Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. From Rotterdam, the ship made its way south to Boulogne, Pas-de-Calais, on the coast of northern France, where Louisa and the Hamiltons boarded. Departing from the French coast they sailed west to New York.

The passenger manifest says that Patrocinio's occupation is a maid and that she is "in the service of Mrs. F. Hamilton of Omaha, Nebraska and shows Louisa's address as 210 S. 52nd Ave, Omaha, Nebraska." Louisa is on the list of second cabin passengers who were new immigrants to the United States. The manifest states the passenger's last place of residence and Louisa said she was from Seron, Spain. Seron is only 16 miles west of Lucar, Louisa's birthplace. Her family might have had relatives in Seron, or they might have moved to Seron, after living in Lucar (Michael Nishimuta, interview, Aug, 2002). Also on the Nieuw Amsterdam's manifest are American citizens, Mr. Frank G.

Hamilton, age 51, and a citizen by marriage, his wife, Louise Hamilton, age 36, and their daughter, Eriosa Hamilton, age 5.

On October 27, 1913, Louisa Patrocinio Lorenzo saw the Statue of Liberty and arrived in the United States of America. Louisa went through the rigors of Ellis Island and passed the physical exams. One of the few items Louisa carried with her was a small Bible, written in Spanish. Her daughter Margaret still has the Bible today (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998).

Louisa and the Hamiltons stayed in New York for a few days in a nice hotel. They traveled directly west by railroad for several days and nights. When they finally arrived at their destination, they had traveled halfway across the United States. Louisa ended up in the exact center of America, Omaha, Nebraska, and the Hamiltons' home town. The family had a household with children and they needed servants to tend them. Louisa became a live in housekeeper and cook.

Louisa learned a valuable lesson one day about the dangers of cooking on a gas stove. Mary Oshimo, a friend of the family, wrote in a letter, "When Louisa first started working for the Hamiltons, not being used to a gas stove, she turned the gas on and walked away then went back and lit the burner & it exploded in her face. Thank Almighty God and His Blessed Mother she had no scars" (Letter of Mary Oshimo).

While Louisa was working as a cook for the Hamiltons, she met a very interesting and unique young man. The Hamiltons hired several other servants, including Kutaro Nishimuta, who was their chauffeur. Kutaro first met Louisa at the Hamiltons'. He was probably smitten by her good looks, quiet nature, and kind smile. He was intelligent,

attractive, and outgoing. It was not long before he asked her out. On February 22, 1914, they went to the Orpheum Theater for their first date. He got home at 10:30 p.m., he wrote in his diary. On May 11, 1914, Kutaro began underlining Louisa's name in his diary (Diary of K.N.).

At the same time, Kutaro was also dating a German woman named Hilda. Kutaro alternated going out with Hilda and with Louisa. On July 12, 1914, he met Hilda and they had to say good-bye, because she was moving to Lincoln, Nebraska. On July 23, he went shopping and to the park with Louisa; they were meeting every day. On July 26, they went to church together, then went to the Hamiltons' house. Kutaro had to say good-bye to Louisa because she was going on a trip. On August 4, Hilda wrote to Kutaro and said that "They were through." On August 9, Kutaro sent Hilda a postcard. Kutaro received a letter from Hilda every two days.

On August 20, Louisa came back from her trip. Kutaro and Louisa went downtown to the park accompanied by Florence, a friend of Louisa's, and he got home at 11:30. August 26, 1914, he wrote, "Went to the park with Louisa, talked in the park until 11:00 p.m." When he got home he had a letter from Hilda. Kutaro wrote that he went to the movies on Sunday. On September 1 he had a postcard from Hilda. On September 3 Kutaro went shopping with a friend and continued to receive letters from Hilda. He took Louisa out frequently to the movies, shopping, and the park. I believe he owned his own car (Diary of K.N.).

On September 13, Kutaro went to church with Louisa, later he took her to look for a new place to live, then they had supper together. When they were finished, he took her

back to the Hamiltons' house. Louisa was looking for a room where she could board, because Mrs. Hamilton did not want Louisa dating a Japanese man. Mrs. Hamilton wanted Louisa to date a white man instead. Because of this prejudice, Louisa had to find a new job and a new place to live. Sometime in September, Mrs. Hamilton fired both Louisa and Kutaro because they were dating. They loved each other and Mrs. Hamilton did not approve of their relationship (Diary of K.N.).

A few days after this incident, Kutaro and Louisa went to River View Park in Omaha, where they talked for a long time. Kutaro took Louisa job hunting. The jobs were probably as a cook or housekeeper, similar to what she had been doing. Later that week, Kutaro went to Louisa's house, but she was not there, so he went home. September 24, Kutaro went to the barber again, he had supper, and went to see Louisa. Sunday, he stayed in his room until 3 p.m., then went out with Louisa. He took her to the movies, then took her home, and he went out after that. Later that week, Kutaro went with Louisa to look for another job, then he took her to a carnival. October 1, Kutaro went to work and then went home. He was still chauffeuring and continued to go out with Louisa. He went to see the electric trolley. He writes, "Seeing Louisa almost everyday." He must have loved her very much. On October 13, he received a letter from his older brother in Japan. Kutaro went to see the barber, who was his friend and might have been another Japanese man, someone Kutaro could talk to (Diary of K.N.).

Hilda continued to write Kutaro, but Kutaro was seeing Louisa quite frequently now. November 15, he accompanied Louisa on another date to the Brandies theater. Kutaro liked to take Louisa out on the town to see movies and plays, he also enjoyed having

dinner with his friend, the barber. Christmas Eve, 1914, he took Louisa to church and then took her home. Surprisingly, on Christmas Day, they helped with Christmas dinner at the Hamiltons' house; later Louisa went to Kutaro's house for dinner, he was also rooming in a boardinghouse. New Year's Eve, 1914, Kutaro celebrated the New Year with his friends (Diary of K.N.).

In February of 1915, after courting Louisa for an entire year, Kutaro asked Louisa to marry him and she said yes. Kutaro knew that Louisa's religious beliefs were very important to her. To marry her, he would have to become a Catholic. He would have to go to mass with her on Sundays and practice the beliefs of her faith. Kutaro already had some knowledge of Christianity from the English classes at the Methodist Church he was attending in San Francisco. He had read the Bible often, to learn English and to learn its teachings. He probably shared her faith in a Christian God when they met in 1914. Kutaro was very spiritual, because he was raised Buddhist when he lived in Japan. Kutaro had been taking Louisa to the Catholic Church often and understood its beliefs.

We do not know what Kutaro and Louisa talked about when they were dating. However, it must have been difficult for them to communicate, because they both had to learn English to speak to each other and to survive and work in America. Her native language was Castilian Spanish and he spoke Japanese. It is amazing that they could communicate at all, but the language of love is universal.

In 1915, it was against the law in Nebraska for a white woman to marry an Asian or Black man. Anti-miscegenation laws prohibited the blending of the races. So when Kutaro and Louisa wanted to get married, they had to drive east across the Missouri River

to the state of Iowa. According to their marriage certificate, on February 18, 1915 they got married by a Catholic priest in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Kutaro was 34 and Louisa was 25 years old. When the ceremony was finished, they went to a photo studio and had a wedding portrait taken. In the picture Kutaro is dressed in a very nice suit, he is standing next to Louisa, who is seated, wearing a white wedding dress (Nishimuta marriage certificate, 1915).

After Kutaro and Louisa got married, they lived in Omaha for a short time. Soon, Kutaro decided that he wanted to make money raising chickens. He invested his money and bought flocks of chickens. But, sadly, the first year he had them, the chickens caught a deadly disease and all died. Afterwards they moved to Oconee, Nebraska, a very small town near present day Columbus, Nebraska. Oconee was little more than a train station and a few houses and stores. Kutaro began to work on the railroads again.

After getting married, Louisa almost immediately got pregnant. She carried her first child through the spring and summer of 1915. She went into labor on October 3, 1915. Her first child was a boy whom they named Joseph Hajime Nishimuta. While Kutaro and Louisa were living in Oconee, a very nice white woman befriended the young mother. This friend of the family was Emma Souther. Her husband, Harry B. Souther, was in charge of the local railroad depot and Emma ran a store. Emma taught Louisa English and American cooking. Emma and Harry Souther already had three children and Emma helped Louisa out with her young family. Emma was very kind to this young couple, and this woman is still talked about and remembered fondly in the Nishimuta family (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998).

When Joseph was little more than one year old, Louisa had her second child. The second child was a girl, named Mary Tomi Nishimuta, born on October 22, 1916. Most of the Nishimuta children were born at home, with only an attending midwife. The doctor was called only if there were problems. The young Nishimuta family was very poor and doctors required precious money for their services.

Both Kutaro and Louisa were strong individualists. They came over from their own countries by themselves, which took a lot of bravery and determination. After he sailed to America, Kutaro could not have been sure if he would find work, but he went on faith that he could find some means to support himself. For an Asian who was a new immigrant with little knowledge of English, job hunting was difficult.

Kutaro and Louisa did what they wanted and did not worry about what others thought of them. They did not cave into Mrs. Hamilton's desires that they not get married, even at the cost of their jobs. They were in love and did not give in to the anti-miscegenation laws in the state of Nebraska. Kutaro was an individual and an independent Issei man. He was different from other Issei men who married Japanese women, he was not afraid to marry a woman of another culture, language, and religion.

Louisa was also a very strong willed woman; she knew that she wanted to marry Kutaro, and that he would have to convert to Catholicism. Louisa took a big risk in leaving the Hamilton's house, her livelihood was gone. But she had faith in Kutaro that he could provide for her and their young family. As poor, first generation immigrants who were not fluent in the English language, it must have been very difficult and a little frightening for this young couple to make a living.

CHAPTER VII

OKLAHOMA DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Farming was a typical occupation for rural Issei. Farming in Japan was a common practice, growing vegetables and rice to feed families and make a small living. As early as 1907, Japanese in California, living in the fertile Santa Clara and San Joaquin Valleys, began working on fruit orchards (Matsumoto, 1993, p. 30). In Oregon's Hood River a community of Japanese began clearing discarded timberland to start small family farms in the early 1900s. "Most Issei had farming experience and a healthy respect for the skills needed to bring sustenance from the soil, for in Japan farmers were more esteemed than those in trade or industry" (Tamura, 1993, p. 70).

Kutaro, Louisa, and their two children, Joseph and Mary, lived in Nebraska for two years from 1915 to 1917. Kutaro worked on the railroads again to support his family but he wanted something more. Kutaro and Louisa wanted to settle down and find a place of their own. They wanted to live on a farm in the country where they could put down roots and hopefully make enough money to support their family.

In 1917 Kutaro and Louisa made a big decision that would change their lives. Through the Japanese immigrant community, Kutaro found a Japanese man in Oklahoma who was a farmer, named Tom Shimachi. Kutaro corresponded with Tom and inquired about working on his farm. The whole family could live and work on the farm together, like most farming families of the time. Tom invited Kutaro to come to Oklahoma and see his farm, so Kutaro drove two states south to the small town of Cushing, Oklahoma.

Kutaro liked Tom and the land where he lived, so he sent word to Louisa to pack up the children and their meager belongings and take the train down to Cushing. I do not know why Kutaro choose Oklahoma, perhaps it was the only place he could find to work with a fellow Japanese. Father Jim said, “Our dad bought a six shooter (gun) before he came to Oklahoma, because it hadn’t been a state for very long, you know” (Father James Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998). Oklahoma had only been a state for ten years, before the Nishimutas moved there in 1917, previous to that it was Indian Territory with few towns.

When the Nishimutas moved to Oklahoma there were a small number of other Japanese families living in the state. Kutaro worked as a tenant farmer, which meant that the Nishimutas lived on the farm where they worked and leased the house and the land from Shimachi. Kutaro learned about farming from his employer. After a time, Shimachi invited Kutaro to become a partner on the farm; Kutaro worked for Shimachi for six years. The type of farming they did was called truck farming. The families did all the growing, harvesting, and packaging by hand on the farm, then they loaded the vegetables on the trucks and delivered them to local stores. The land laws in Oklahoma were not as strict as on the West Coast because the opposition was not as organized, therefore, the Shimachis, and later the Nishimutas, were able to buy land in their name because Oklahoma did not have an alien land law.

The Shimachi farm was located near the small town of Cushing in the northeast part of the state, between Oklahoma City and Tulsa. This farm had a creek running behind it, so they called it the Euchee Creek farm. It was located five miles from Drumright and

five miles from Cushing. One of the Nishimuta children remembers other Japanese children coming over to the farm. The other children were speaking Japanese, but the Nishimuta children only spoke English. Father Jim said, “They were chattering away in Japanese and I couldn’t understand what they were saying” (Father James Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Kutaro and Louisa’s third child was born at the farm in Cushing on February 20, 1918. This child was a boy named Francis Sakai Nishimuta, their first child born in Oklahoma, where all the rest of the children were born. Two years later, a sister was born on May 5, 1920, her name was Grace Nobuko. Two years after that, came another girl named Margaret Louise, born on July 25, 1922.

All of the children worked on the farm as soon as they were old enough. In those days, all hands were needed to help. The vegetables that were grown on the farm were hand picked, washed, and packaged. The boys and men also built hot beds to keep the vegetables warm. Kutaro and Louisa delivered the vegetables to groceries and markets in their small truck. They sold the vegetables to local markets around the area. Sometimes the Nishimutas would have a small roadside stand and sell the produce themselves. Father Jim said, “Kutaro would help the customers, because he spoke better English than Louisa did. Louisa’s job was to collect the money and give change” (Father James Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

When the Nishimuta children were growing up in Cushing, Kutaro emphasized to them the importance of education. To Kutaro, who grew up in Japan, the education of his children was very important, because of its roots in the Japanese culture. The Emperor

Meiji passed laws that all Japanese children should attend school. The Japanese encouraged and expected their children to go to school. So, all of the Nishimuta children, when they were old enough, attended a one room school house in Norfolk County, which had eight grades in one school. Later the younger children attended St. Anthony's Elementary School in Okmulgee. All the children attended high school in Cushing or Okmulgee. They all graduated from high school and almost all went to college and received college degrees. The Nishimuta children became very close as they grew up. They only had each other; they did not have any grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins to visit. Later on, the family would try to have a little reunion about Easter time, a time to get together and renew family ties (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998).

In 1924, Kutaro and his family decided to move to another farm. This farm was owned by an Irish man named Pat Ryan who was retiring from the farming business. The Ryans had 160 acres of land with a creek that ran by it. The farm had a large barn and forty acres of meadow, and the land was good and rich. The barn was big enough for the horse teams that plowed the fields and it held hundreds of bales of hay. The farm also had an underground kiln for sweet potatoes. The Nishimutas leased this farm from the Ryans for nine years, from 1924 to 1933. Uncle Frank said about the Ryan farm, "We did real good on that farm. We had lots of trucks going and we had a good market. Every year they made a profit and they had four delivery trucks in the summer" (Frank Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Mr. Ryan built a new four bedroom house for Kutaro and Louisa, which had an outhouse. After the first year, Kutaro built two frame houses for his hired hands and their

families. Kutaro hired other Japanese men to help him on the farm. It was on the Ryan farm that Louisa had her last three children. The next child was a boy named Paul William, he was born on March 16, 1924. James Kyuzaemon, came into the world three years later on January 24, 1927. Five years later, their last child and fifth son was born, Robert Kutaro Nishimuta, on December 8, 1932.

There were only a few other Japanese in Oklahoma at this time, and the young Nishimuta family made many friends, mostly Anglos. Most of the friends they met through their church and school. The Nishimuta family attended St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Cushing. One of these friends of the family was Reverend Jerome Casttelett, a Spanish priest who came to visit the family every summer. The priest ministered to the migrant farm workers from Mexico. Louisa and the pastor could talk to each other very well in Spanish. She must have enjoyed talking in her native language. Louisa was also able to receive magazines from Mexico, which she could read in Spanish (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998).

In 1929, when the stock market crashed, it meant years of hard times for America. The Great Depression brought on hundreds of bank failures, which caused many families to lose their money they had worked so hard to save. Millions of men and women lost their jobs, farms, and homes. The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck, epitomized the conditions and torturous circumstances of the farmers of Oklahoma. Drought conditions and over-planting created the Great Dust Bowl in the panhandle of Western Oklahoma. Many families were forced off their land and fled west on route 66 to the Promised Land of California. But not all of the farmers in Oklahoma had to leave the state.

The Nishimuta family was very fortunate that they were able to stay and survive on the land during the Great Depression. Their farm was in the northeast part of the state, near Tulsa, which had a moister climate than the western panhandle. There are many reasons they were able to survive. First of all they had enough water to irrigate their crops, they had a deep well dug, which supplied them with plenty of water. They were also smart farmers and did not over-use their land. Kutaro learned well from Tom Shimachi. They had many sources of food and did not waste any. They raised cows and used them for milk and beef. They had pigs, which they used for ham and bacon. The family slaughtered their own stock and had a smokehouse to store it and they also canned meat in a pressure cooker. They made money by selling the extra meat they raised; they saved money and actually made a profit on the farm during the Great Depression.

To help the family farm business, the five Nishimuta boys worked before and after school on the farm. They fed and watered the horses, cows, pigs, and chickens that were raised for meat. There was always plenty of work to be done, and the vegetables grown on the farm provided needed food for hardworking families. The girls were usually in the kitchen cooking for the boys who helped out in the fields. The women also helped to hand pack the delicate vegetables before they went to market, especially the strawberries. The Nishimutas employed other men and women to help with the hard work on the farm. Fern Campbell, one of the hired women, drove a tractor on the farm. Eventually Fern and the second oldest Nishimuta son, Frank, fell in love, and they were married on February 5, 1939. The oldest Nishimuta son, Joseph, also met a pretty young woman and married Maxie Kilmer, on December 6, 1940. After they were married, the young

couples stayed on the farm and continued to work (Fern Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

To supplement their diet, the five Nishimuta boys hunted small wild game. They hunted rabbits, opossums, frogs, and squirrels to survive. Father Jim said about hunting, “It was my job to put meat on the table” (Father James Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998). The boys would go hunting on the farm and supply the family with additional protein. Their mother would cook the small animals by stewing or frying them. Louisa would also make Spanish rice, a family recipe which included chicken and rice, flavored with saffron, a very expensive spice from Spain. As a child, Louisa would pick the saffron flowers as a way to make money. Kutaro also made some food from the old country. He would make what he called “Japanese cooking.” It was like a stir fry dish with onions, eggplant, and soy sauce. Eventually, Louisa could make a good chop suey dish (Father James Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

In addition to fresh meat there were always plenty of fruit and vegetables. The Nishimutas grew strawberries, tomatoes, cauliflower, okra, sweet potatoes, radishes, onions, and asparagus. They also harvested watermelon, cantaloupes, and spinach. They grew spices such as parsley, dill, and mustard. The Nishimutas canned peaches, pears, apples, cherries, and blackberries in the summertime, and they made applesauce. They used Mason jars and pressure cookers to can and preserve their own food; they did all the work themselves. They would also make homemade wine from wild grapes, for holidays like Christmas or for other special occasions. Kutaro was a light drinker and would have a bottle of beer now and then (Paul Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

The Nishimutas did so well that they hired other Japanese and Caucasians to help them on the farm. Uncle Frank remembers, “Dad hired men to work for ten cents an hour and paid them a dollar a day; during the spring and summer he would hire 20 men.” The Nishimutas lived on the Ryan farm until 1933. “At that time, we sold them (the vegetables) wholesale to grocery stores and restaurants. We had all kinds of stores, retail grocery stores, restaurants, and fruit stands” (Frank Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Frank said that they didn’t need driver’s licenses in those days. “At twelve years old I drove a truck to the market. The first time my mother taught me how to drive. She had the route that I took. She and I worked together for a long time until I learned how to do it.” In the early 1930s it was not common for a woman to be driving a car. Frank said, “One time I was driving the truck back from the market, we passed another car and went in a ditch, little Paul was riding on the passenger side and almost fell out of the car, Paul’s overalls kept him from falling out, he was all muddy and crying, but he lived” (Frank Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Louisa and Kutaro continued to attend church every Sunday morning wherever they lived. Louisa stressed to her children the importance of God in their lives, and they always said grace before dinner. Frank said, “When Lent began we gathered around the living room and all recited the rosary. We were all prepared to receive the sacraments when we were old enough” (Frank Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998). Going to church gave them a connection to the local community as well as a strong family bond. The church also gave them a sense of purpose and a belief system. It helped them keep their lives in perspective, knowing that God would take care of them and love them.

With this background, in the spring of 1933, at the tender age of 17, Mary Tomi, the oldest Nishimuta daughter, decided to join the Catholic Church and serve as a nun. After she graduated from Cushing High School, Mary traveled to the state of New York and joined the Foreign Mission Sisters of St. Dominic. This is an order of the Maryknoll Sisters, whose convent is located in Syracuse. While Mary was in the convent she attended college and received a bachelor's degree; she was the first woman in her family to go to college.

In 1930, a Catholic friend, who was also a realtor, convinced Kutaro and his family to buy a farm of their own. The boys convinced their father to buy an old farm in Cushing for \$6,000. The Rosebud farm was six miles east of the Ryan farm and had eighty acres of land. They took some of the houses from the Ryan farm and moved them to the new farm, but the family did not move in until August, 1933. The Nishimutas built hotbeds to keep the vegetables warm in the winter, and they also built pig pens and chicken houses. They did not have running water, indoor plumbing, or electricity. They cooked on a wood stove, heated water for their baths on the stove, and used kerosene lamps for light. Margaret said, "Our house in Cushing was so small that Grace and I slept in the same room with our parents until I graduated from high school" (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998). The family was very self-sufficient on the Cushing farm and again raised farm animals for food, such as pigs, cows and chickens. The whole family stayed in Cushing for five years until 1939, and the younger children went to elementary school in Cushing. Like most American boys, the Nishimutas played baseball after school (Paul Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

During the 1930s Kutaro was not completely cut off from seeing other Japanese. In a letter from Kutaro to his daughter Mary, written in 1937, he said that he was taking the family to a Japanese picnic, “This is Japanese picnic so all our people around Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Okmulgee, Jenks, and Cushing will be there.” Apparently the Japanese were very spread out over the state, in isolated pockets, but they did try and get together once in a while to socialize (Letter from Kutaro to Sister Mary, 1937).

In 1939, Kutaro learned about a Japanese family, the Tomoros, in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, that wanted to move back to Japan. Mrs. Tomoro was homesick; she missed her friends and relatives in Japan. The Tomoro family decided to sell their farm to the Nishimutas. The oldest Nishimuta son, Joseph, and his wife, Maxie, stayed and worked the old Cushing farm. It is a Japanese tradition that the oldest son inherits the family business, so Joe kept the farm in Cushing. Frank, the second oldest, along with Fern, stayed with Joe to help on the farm. The rest of the family moved to the Tomoro farm, which was just west of Okmulgee.

Okmulgee is about thirty miles south of Tulsa and a very fertile area, with green rolling hills. Okmulgee is about fifty miles away from the farm in Cushing. The new farm had a city water line to irrigate the fields, indoor plumbing, and electricity. Unfortunately, by the time the Tomoros sold their farm and moved to California, WWII broke out and they were put in the concentration camps in California and never made it back to Japan. Margaret said that the Tomoros corresponded with the Nishimuta family during the war, so the Nishimutas were aware of the internment of the Japanese on the

West Coast. The younger Nishimuta children grew up on the farm in Okmulgee, and their parents lived on that farm for another 20 years.

Louisa did not receive many letters from her family in Spain, and only one survived. Louisa received a letter dated February 16, 1945, sent by her niece Adoracion, from a small village in the French Alps. Adoracion and her family moved from Spain to France because of the Spanish Civil War. The war ravaged Spain from 1936 to 1939 and left a million Spaniards dead. In the letter, Adoracion says that her brother, Louisa's nephew, Louis, was killed during WWII on May 12, 1940. Adoracion said that her other brother, Raphael, was an aviator in the French Aviation, or Air Force. Adoracion also added the sad news that Louisa's brother, also named Louis, died of a sudden heart attack on March 29, 1944. This marks the beginning of a family history of heart disease. Adoracion wrote, "We have had it very bad here due to the German occupation." Adoracion added that this is the first letter she has ever written in Spanish (Letter of Adoracion Lorenzo, 1945).

This letter showed how difficult it was for new immigrants to keep in touch with family members in the old country. Louisa's family moved from Spain to France, then France got taken over by the Germans. Adoracion probably learned French in school, and there was another language barrier. World War II was a difficult time for many families in Europe and America, when family separations frequently occurred. This was the last correspondence that Louisa ever received from her family; unfortunately, she lost track of her family in France and Spain after she received this letter.

Kutaro chose a typical Issei occupation, farming. He found other Japanese men who taught him good farming practices for that part of the country. Although they were poor and working class, the Nishimuta family was very fortunate that they were not adversely affected by the drought and dust storms of Oklahoma during the Great Depression. The family worked hard to use all the resources they had on the farm, they canned fruit, raised animals for meat and hunted to supply additional food. They also had a good water supply for their crops. In a family economy, all of the eight children and their parents contributed to the family business. In this type of work, the more children, the better, for there were more workers.

The Nishimutas were different from other Nisei families in that they were Catholic, because of their Spanish mother. Most Nisei on the West Coast were Buddhists or Protestants. In rural Oklahoma, the Nishimutas were isolated from larger Japanese communities and were not as influenced by the Japanese culture as the Cortez and Hood River Nisei. However, they did know the Shimachis and the Tommoros, who were a few of the Japanese farmers in Oklahoma during the 1920s and 1930s. During this time, the Japanese did have social occasions, like the picnics that Kutaro went to, but the war changed everything.

CHAPTER VIII

WORLD WAR II

At dawn, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese military completely surprised the United States by the lethal air attack on U.S. ships and planes at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On this day the militarist Empire of Japan attacked the Americans with a swift and sudden early morning air strike by Japanese bombers. When it was over, more than 2,000 American soldiers had lost their lives and most of the large battleships were sunk or badly damaged.

Government officials knew of the tense relations between the U.S. and Japan, but few expected this kind of sudden warfare. This attack by Japan forced an isolationist America into WWII. The next day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made his famous “Day of Infamy” address and declared war on Japan. The immigrant Japanese in America were also surprised and confused by the attack on Pearl Harbor; it would dramatically change their lives.

Because the American military feared a Japanese invasion of the West Coast, machine gunners were placed in strategic areas, like Point Presidio in San Francisco. Army and civilian boats patrolled and guarded the entire West Coast, from Seattle to San Diego. Guards with dogs were on alert watching the Pacific Ocean for offensive attacks. The whole Western United States became a militarized zone.

Slowly and surely Japanese Americans lost their civil rights. First, they had to get identification papers. The U.S. government required all Japanese people to go to the post office and get identification cards, including a photograph and fingerprint (Hosokawa,

1969, p. 312). Then, military and government officials, without warrants, searched the homes of the innocent Japanese, and Japanese leaders were jailed without just cause.

On the West Coast, curfews were placed on people of Japanese ancestry, including the children of Japanese immigrants, who were, by law, American citizens. The Japanese could not go anywhere without a Caucasian escort and were forbidden to assemble in groups. Many church functions had to be canceled because of this.

The fears of a Japanese invasion of the West Coast, combined with racial prejudice and war hysteria, prompted President Roosevelt to sign executive order 9066. This order, which did not mention any specific ethnic group, allowed the U.S. military to remove all suspicious people from the Western United States (Daniels, 1993, p. 46). Political pressure combined with fears that the local Japanese would be in secret sympathy with the enemy (known as a fifth column sentiment) helped authorities incarcerate the American Japanese. Lt. General John L. De Witt, commander general of the Western Defense Command, who was responsible for West Coast security, pressured President Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 9066. This order was signed on Feb. 19, 1942, ten weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. It authorized the Secretary of War and his military commanders to “prescribe military areas, from which any or all persons may be excluded.” This document essentially gave the military the authority to move anyone anywhere they wanted (U.S. Congress, Senate, CWIRC, 1982, p. 49).

The evacuation of Japanese Americans started with notices on telephone poles. In a very short time span, the Japanese were forced to sell or store all their property, cars, and personal belongings except what they could carry. Many lost everything, or sold at a

loss. They lost their land, farms, animals, crops, and furniture. After Executive Order 9066, the United States government hastily put together 16 assembly centers, temporary housing for as few as 245 to as many as 18,719 men, women, and children. Most of the assembly centers were at county fairgrounds; in Santa Anita, California, the people were housed at the race track. Some families had to literally live in the horse stalls, which still smelled of manure. The Japanese citizens of San Jose were sent to the Salinas assembly center. At the assembly centers the living conditions were very crude, there was no privacy, and the men and women had to share bathrooms. There were no individual toilets and the women had to hold up sheets to get some decency. The Portland assembly center was the Portland stockyard. "It was filthy, smelly and dirty" (Kitano, 1993, p. 36).

After spending several months in the assembly centers, the Japanese were put on buses and trains and taken to the relocation centers. Not told where they were being taken, many feared the worst. There were a total of ten relocation centers, all in very inhospitable areas, in deserts, swampland, or mountainous areas, mostly uninhabited. They were dry and dusty and very hot in the summer, with chilling cold winters.

"Manzanar and Poston were in the desert, Gila River, near Phoenix, suffered severely from the heat. Topaz was covered with greasewood brush. Rohwer and Jerome in Arkansas, were located in the swampland, with severe drainage problems" (U.S. Congress, Senate, CWRIC, 1982, p. 157).

The living quarters of the camps were very small and overcrowded, with two or three families in one small room. At Minidoka, the sewer system did not get finished for a year after the people moved in and they were forced to use smelly outhouses while

waiting for the sewer system. At Heart Mountain, Poston, Topaz and Minidoka, dust storms were a terrible problem, with dust blowing in through the doors and floorboards. The food was barely adequate as it was difficult to feed so many people at once and there was very little money for food. Long lines and crowded mess halls were the norm. Eventually the prisoners started their own gardens to add fresh vegetables to the meals, which became a money-making industry in later years.

The biggest problem at the camps was the lack of adequate health care. There was not enough medical staff and proper equipment to help so many people at once. “Epidemics of dysentery were reported at Topaz, Minidoka, and Jerome, and a typhoid epidemic occurred at Minidoka. Evacuees testified about polio and tuberculosis as well” (U.S. Congress, Senate, CWRIC, 1982, p.165).

Surrounded by armed guards and barbed wire, some Japanese did not leave the concentration camps until 1946. Most Japanese spent more than three years in the camps. During the war the young and able-bodied Japanese were allowed to get jobs outside the camps. Some got jobs in the central states, and after the war many stayed in cities like Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City and New York City (Daniels, 1993, p. 81). Many Japanese farmers were afraid to leave the camps or had nothing to go back to.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the entire population of the Cortez colony, who were from the San Joaquin Valley, were moved to Amache, Colorado, to the Granada Relocation Center Internment Camp. Six hundred people, including women and children, stayed there for years until the end of the war. By the fall of 1945, most of the

residents of the colonies had returned home but they had lost their crops and had to start over from scratch (Matsumoto, 1993, p. 153).

Like the Cortez Japanese, the families of Hood River, Oregon were forced into concentration camps during World War II. They were first moved to the Pinedale Assembly Center in central California, then moved to the permanent Internment Camp at Tule Lake, California, near the Oregon border. This was a very hot and desolate place with many severe dust storms. It was also where the Japanese dissenters against the war were imprisoned. After internment, many of the Hood River residents returned to their farms, but most were not in the same condition they had left them. Much of their property was destroyed or stolen. Their crops were not kept up and weeds had taken over. Many farmers had to start over because they lost their investments through stolen equipment and through property and crop damage.

The war hysteria after Pearl Harbor forced 120,000 Japanese people living in the Western states to be removed from their homes; they were forced to move against their will and their civil rights to government concentration camps. These camps were in very mountainous and inhospitable areas, they were very cold in winter and extremely hot in the summer, with no air conditioning or central heat, and very little privacy. Although they were American citizens, the Nisei who lived on the West Coast were interned during WWII. Of the Nisei men who were interned, some volunteered to fight during the war, and others were drafted.

In Okmulgee, Oklahoma, that Sunday morning, December 7, Louisa and her son Jim were listening to the radio. Suddenly, it was announced that Japan had attacked Pearl

Harbor. After Louisa heard the terrible news, she began to cry. She cried for the U.S. seamen who were killed, and she cried because she feared for her five sons and her Japanese husband. No one knew what would or could happen to the Japanese immigrants in America.

In California, Illinois, Utah, and Idaho, there were reports of shootings and stabbings in retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbor. At least five innocent Japanese people were killed outright. Most Japanese feared for their lives, so they did anything to cooperate with the authorities. Sadly, innocent Japanese Americans threw away precious possessions from the old country; family photos, pictures of the Emperor, and Japanese flags were burned and destroyed. Because of Pearl Harbor and the war, Japanese Americans stopped celebrating the Emperor's Birthday and were fearful to gather in groups. Japanese Americans were also in shock; like most Americans, they could hardly believe that their home country would suddenly attack their new homeland (Tamura, 1993, p. 145).

Over the next four months restrictions against Japanese Americans were legislated. The first restriction was that firearms, weapons, ammunition, explosives, signal devices, short-wave radios, and cameras were to be turned over to United States government officials. In Oklahoma, the Nishimutas were required to turn in their hunting rifles and ammunition to the local police; they also had their homes searched for enemy evidence (Frank Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Through circumstance, sheer luck, or the grace of God, the Nishimuta family was not put into the concentration camps. Fortunately for the Nishimutas, Oklahoma was outside

the Western Militarized Zone. However, the Nishimutas heard about the camps through newspapers and the radio. If Kutaro had settled in California, they would have been put in the camps and lost all their land. Ironically, there were Japanese dissenters from Hawaii who were in concentration camps in Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas, and in Crystal City, Texas, only one state away from the Nishimutas in Oklahoma (U.S. Congress, Senate, CWIRC, 1982, p.157).

In 1942, the two oldest Nishimuta sons, Joe and Frank, got drafted. While Joe and Frank were in the military, hired hands stayed on the farm in Cushing to work the land. When Frank was asked his nationality on an army questionnaire, he wrote in "Oriental." He thought he would get killed if he wrote down "Japanese." Joe, the oldest, went into the National Guard. He became a medic in the 45th Division of the Army. Later, Joe became a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and fought in France. The 442nd was a special unit, made up of all Japanese, American born, Nisei men.

Joe's younger brother, Frank, joined the Navy and worked at the Naval Ammunition Depot in McAlester, Oklahoma. Frank also worked at the Veterans Hospital in Okmulgee. Frank was in the reserves because he was married to Fern Campbell and had a young baby at home. Frank later went to Fort Smith, Arkansas and worked in the Army Post Office. Frank was going to be in the 442nd but he got very sick, and the doctor gave him a discharge. He then went to the Naval Base in McAlester and learned to be a refrigeration mechanic, which would become his lifelong career (Frank Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Most of the Japanese American men who fought in WWII were in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Some of the Japanese men were drafted, but most of the men were volunteers from the camps who wanted to help their country. They left their parents, wives, children, brothers and sisters, to go overseas and fight for America. More than 10,000 men from Hawaii volunteered to fight, and nearly 3,000 were accepted. In all, 33,000 Nisei from all across the country served in the U.S. military. The 442nd was one of the most highly decorated fighting units of World War II, receiving thousands of Purple Hearts and Bronze Stars (Hosokawa, 1969, p. 404).

My father, Paul William Nishimuta, after graduating from St. Anthony's High School in Cushing, was drafted in July of 1944, when he had just turned 20. He went to boot camp in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was then sent to Fort Shelby, Florida, to train with the 442nd. Paul was sent to France, and served in Company B as an infantryman. Paul already knew how to use a rifle and was a good shot; he learned by hunting rabbits on the farm. While fighting the Germans in Italy, Paul received the Bronze Star for Valor. The Bronze Star was presented to him in Leghorn, Italy by the commanding officer of the 442nd, Col. Virgil Mill. Paul's citation reads, "For heroic achievement in action on April 21, 1945." He received his medal for attacking a house that was full of German soldiers. A local newspaper story from 1948 reads, "Despite the heavy concentration of fire coming from the house, he advanced to within thirty yards of the building. Rapidly firing his M-1 rifle into the doors and windows and repeatedly exposing himself as he fired, he was able to pin the foe down long enough to permit his squad to enter the house." As a result of his action, one of the Germans was killed,

seventeen were captured, and eight were wounded. “His outstanding courage reflects high credit in the military service. He also wears the Mediterranean Theater Campaign Ribbon, a Presidential Citation, Combat Infantryman’s Badge, and the Good Conduct Ribbon” (*Okmulgee Daily Times*, *Paul W. Nishimuta Gets Bronze Star*, January 1, 1948).

During WWII, while the three eldest sons were in the military, the other children stayed in Oklahoma, except Mary. Mary Tomi Nishimuta, the oldest daughter, who had been ordained as a Maryknoll sister and received her college degree in New York, was sent to Hawaii. She moved to Maui in 1937, and worked in a mission orphanage with ten other Maryknoll sisters. She was on the island of Maui when Pearl Harbor, Oahu, was attacked by the Japanese, in 1941. Fortunately, Mary was not hurt during the attack. She continued to work at the orphanage for a total of 12 years and made many friends on Maui (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998).

On Pearl Harbor Sunday, back in Oklahoma, the Nishimuta family in Okmulgee consisted of Kutaro, Louisa, Paul, Jim, and Robert. While Mary was in Maui, her two youngest sisters, Margaret and Grace, were going to school in Ponca City. After they graduated from Cushing High School, both girls decided to become nurses and attended nurses’ training classes in Ponca City, Oklahoma. Margaret heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor on the radio when she was in nurse’s training. “I remember I was upstairs in the nurses’ quarters at the time when they announced it on the radio.” During the war, many people believed that the Japanese military would attack the United States mainland. Father Jim said, “There was a lot of prejudice back then, boys at school would call you a ‘Jap’.” Margaret said, “It was a very difficult time for our family. You know, because

my dad, being Japanese, there was a lot of prejudice against the Japanese. There were people who wanted everything (their land) and us arrested because we were Japanese. I remember feeling so sad about the whole situation and knowing it would affect my father. I was very concerned about my dad” (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998).

While Margaret and Grace were in nurses’ training their pastor suggested that they change their name tags and use their mother’s maiden name, Lorenzo, instead of their father’s name, Nishimuta, “So we wouldn’t get so much prejudice.” She adds, “Sometimes you would go into a room to take care of someone and they saw you had a Japanese name and they didn’t want you in the room.” After they changed their name tags, “We didn’t have any problems, most people didn’t know that we were Japanese, they would ask if we were Filipino, or ask are you this or that.” Some people who first saw the Nishimuta family did not realize that they were half Japanese, because their skin became very dark from working outside. Paul said, “Some people thought that we were (American) Indians” (Paul Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

But Kutaro Nishimuta was still known to be Japanese to the people of Okmulgee. Kutaro was afraid that the authorities would take his money away. Margaret said, “He took all his money out of the bank and hid it in the cellar because they were taking the money of all the Japanese people and confiscating it. He buried the money in the cellar, and he only told one child about it, in case anything happened to him.” Asked if her mother and father were afraid, Margaret replied, “I am sure that they were, I know my dad was. He would get threats and things from people in town. Most people supported him though, they knew him” (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998).

It was fortunate for the Nishimutas that by 1941, Kutaro and Louisa had been living in Oklahoma for 24 years. Since the family was very devout, the whole family would routinely attend Sunday Mass at St. Peter and Paul's Church in Cushing or at St. Anthony's in Okmulgee. They were known by the whole parish as good people. But it was the generosity of two upstanding men that helped the family through the war. Because Kutaro would drive around the area delivering his produce, he was under some suspicion. A few buyers did not want his vegetables anymore. To keep his good reputation and family honor, Kutaro kept on his person, throughout the war, two letters of recommendation. One was written by the Sheriff of Okmulgee County, John Lenox. The other one was by a prominent lawyer, A.L. Emery, a member of the parish at St. Anthony's, where Kutaro and his family attended church. Mr. Emery states in his letter that Kutaro did not ask for the letter but that the gentleman volunteered it. Both letters were written in early 1942 and attest to the loyalty of the family as "good citizens."

Robert Nishimuta, the youngest son, recalled, "During the war the Sheriff came out to the farm to buy a bushel of vegetables, but the real reason that he came out was because some people in town had said that we were going to poison the waterworks. But the Sheriff was our friend, so he needed an excuse to come out so that he could say that he investigated us, he was kind of embarrassed that he had to do it." Robert also said, "There was a lot of curiosity about us then, we had a fruit stand right by the road, and people would drive by and just stare at us, rubberneckers, you know. They wanted to know what those strange people looked like, or what they were doing" (Robert Nishimuta, interview, October, 2000).

In 1944 Margaret met a baby-faced, 19-year-old-young man on a blind date, who was training to be a pilot. He kept asking her out, and she went out with him because he was a good dancer, and she liked to dance. He asked Margaret to marry him, but she said that she could not marry him because he wasn't a Catholic. The young man wanted to marry Margaret very much, so he took catechism classes and became a Catholic. Margaret then decided to marry Bob Cavnar (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998). Margaret, the Nishimutas' youngest daughter, married Bobby Cavnar on June 26, 1944. Bob was an Air Force pilot and worked for the U.S. Government for many years. Margaret and Bob Cavnar had six children, and numerous grandchildren. Sadly, Col. Bob Cavnar passed away on February 14, 2002 in Dallas, Texas at age 78 (Margaret Cavnar, interview, February, 2002).

In the late summer of 1945, after defeating the Germans, the United States wanted to end the war with Japan. President Roosevelt had called for the unconditional surrender of Japan, Germany and Italy. After a bloody fight with the Japanese at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the United States was concerned with the mounting casualties of the war. They believed the Japanese would not surrender without a fight down to the last man. The United States had planned an elaborate invasion of southern Japan and Tokyo, but they knew it could cost up to half a million American lives. The United States needed to force Japan to surrender. The new President, Harry Truman, and his staff decided to drop the first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima.

On August 6, 1945, the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, at 8:15 a.m. The bomb instantaneously killed more than 100,000 innocent Japanese civilians. Many

more suffered burns and died later of radiation exposure. The city was destroyed. The military hard-liners of the Japanese cabinet would not surrender. Three days later on August 9, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki. Again the city was destroyed and thousands lost their lives. The Emperor sided with the peace makers and declared unconditional surrender. The bombings surely saddened Kutaro and other Japanese Americans. The city of Nagasaki is just across the bay from Izumi city, where Kutaro was born. With loyalties to the Emperor and the people of Japan conflicting with the love of their home, the United States, it must have been very difficult for the Issei to understand the chaos of war.

When the war was finally over, the 442nd stayed in Europe as part of the U.S. occupation. Joe, the oldest son, was able to return to work on the farm in Cushing. Frank returned to help on the farm too, and then moved to McAlester, Oklahoma. Paul stayed in Europe, as part of the occupation forces, and while still in the army, attended classes in Florence. He took business and language classes and learned to speak a little Italian.

Although the Nishimutas were not put in internment camps during World War II, the war still had a large impact on their lives. From the news of Pearl Harbor, Louisa cried over the fear she faced for her children and her Japanese husband. Three of her sons were drafted and two saw heavy combat and possible death. Kutaro took his life savings out of the bank and hid it in the cellar; he feared that his hard earned money would be taken from him. Kutaro also carried letters that testified his loyalty to America, should anyone stop and question him. His children suffered through prejudice and name calling. It was not an easy time for any Japanese Americans, no matter where they lived.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES

During the fifties and sixties, Kutaro and Louisa continued to live on the farm in Okmulgee. After the war, Paul returned to Oklahoma. Through the GI Bill he attended the University of Oklahoma in Norman. He majored in journalism with a strong interest in photography. When Paul was stationed in Europe he took many beautiful pictures of Rome and Italy. Paul graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950 and made journalism his career for life. Paul met his future wife, Ora Louvenia Strong, while attending classes at the University of Oklahoma. Ora was a pretty, young, friendly girl, with strawberry blonde hair and hazel eyes. Ora's father was a teacher from Norman who encouraged his four daughters and one son to go to college. Ora was also a journalism major and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1952. They were married by the Justice of the Peace in Norman on December, 30, 1950. After they graduated, the couple moved to Lawton, Oklahoma. Paul got a job working for the local newspaper, The Lawton Constitution. He sold advertising and also worked selling furniture. Paul and Ora had five children, of whom I am the youngest, Juli Ann Ora, born in 1962. Paul and Ora, now separated, have seven grandchildren (Paul Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Kutaro and Louisa's second oldest daughter, Grace Nobuko Nishimuta, after high school and nursing school, met James Francis Conroy whom she married in the Catholic Church in Okmulgee, on November 24, 1949. James Conroy served in the Army during the war. The couple later moved to Lincoln, Nebraska and owned and operated Conroy's

Bakery, a family business. They have adopted five children and have many grandchildren.

Robert, the youngest son of Kutaro and Louisa, graduated from St. Anthony's High School, in Okmulgee in 1950. St Anthony's was a Catholic school, attended by the younger Nishimuta children, Paul, Jim and Robert. After graduation Robert decided to join the Air Force. Robert said, "The Korean War was on and I wanted to use the GI bill to go to college, we didn't have a lot of money then." Robert was sent to Korea and was trained to be an aircraft electrician. He repaired military airplanes while in Korea, where he was stationed from 1951 to 1955 (Robert Nishimuta, interview, October, 2000).

On June 20, 1954, the Nishimuta family had a very happy celebration. James Kyuzaemon Nishimuta, the fourth son of the Nishimutas, came home to celebrate his ordination as a Maryknoll Priest. Father Jim had completed five years of college in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He then took two years of philosophy, one year as a novitiate, and two years of theology at the Maryknoll Seminary in New York. His parents, Kutaro and Louisa, drove from Oklahoma to New York to attend the graduation ceremonies. There were a few other family members there, including Jim's brother, Frank, and his sister, Mary, who was a Maryknoll Sister.

After the ceremony in New York, the family drove back to Oklahoma where Father Jim gave his First High Mass at St. Anthony's Church in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. This time, the entire family attended, including all eight siblings, their young children, and his parents. There was a large reception following the Mass, with 200 guests attending. After graduating from the seminary, Father Jim found out that he would be

going to Japan as a Maryknoll missionary. Because he grew up in Oklahoma, Father Jim had to learn to speak and read Japanese. He had not learned the language from his father. Father Jim spent the next 45 years of his life in Sapporo, Japan, where he is a parish priest in a church that also has a large kindergarten. Father Jim's parents, brothers, and sisters were all very proud of him (Father James Nishimuta, interview, August, 1998).

Sister Mary Nishimuta remained a Maryknoll nun for most of her life. She was always a member of the Catholic Church and traveled worldwide working with the poor in orphanages and convents. She moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in the 1970s and served with her nieces and nephews in the Charismatic Renewal movement. She traveled all over the country and visited her relatives wherever they were, including California and Hawaii. She carried on her mother's role as the strength of the family and as a spiritual matriarch. Aunt Mary was always a very kind and sweet woman. She single-handedly took care of her brother Paul after he had his stroke in 1983.

A momentous event for the Nishimuta family occurred on December 13, 1955, when (Joseph) Kutarō Nishimuta became an American citizen. "The passage of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 effectively eliminated race as a barrier to immigration and naturalization" (Tamura, 1993, p. 249). Immigrants could no longer be categorized as "aliens ineligible for citizenship." Because Kutarō had kept all his immigration papers, he was eligible for the citizenship test. Kutarō studied hard and took the test with four women, who were all from Germany. In a newspaper article, there is a photograph of a quiet and serious, yet proud, 74 year-old Japanese man, holding an American flag, who was finally allowed to vote in the country where he had lived for 50 years. Louisa also

wanted to become an American citizen, but she could not find her immigration papers. After she came over from Spain, Louisa lost her immigration papers. So she could not become an American citizen and was always an alien.

In 1955, the youngest Nishimuta son, Robert, who had joined the Air Force after high school, returned to Oklahoma when his tour of Korea had finished. Robert used the GI bill to attend college at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. While living in Stillwater, Robert worked in a grocery store for extra money. Robert graduated from OSU in 1960 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. After he graduated, Robert was hired by General Motors Co. and moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Robert lived in Milwaukee for two years. While he was there, he met a smart, blonde woman, who was also working for GM. Robert married Louise Joanne Barker on November 24, 1962. Robert and Louise have three daughters and numerous grandchildren.

Kutaro was a life long smoker who always rolled his own cigarettes. His smoking finally caught up to him in 1960, when he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Margaret said, "They told us there was nothing else they could do for him, so we brought him home to die" (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998). On July 13, 1960, at the age of 79, he passed away at home with his family beside him. It was only fitting that his son, Father Jim, would be the priest at his father's funeral service. Kutaro is buried at a small cemetery in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. He had a great life of adventure and travel, but finally settled down on a small family farm.

After his father's death, Father Jim stayed with his mother for six months. The family decided to sell the farm in Okmulgee, as all of the children had moved away. Father Jim and his brothers helped to sell the farm and settle the affairs. Afterwards, Louisa moved to a small apartment in Okmulgee. A few years later, she moved to Dallas, Texas, to live with her daughter Margaret. Louisa lived with Margaret's family for several years. "My mother never did learn to read or write English. My daughter tried to teach her but she didn't want to learn. Mother thought it was too late in her life to learn" (Margaret Cavnar, interview, August, 1998). In 1965, five years after her husband's death, Louisa passed away quietly in her sleep, of a massive heart attack, at her daughter's home in Dallas. She is buried in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, next to her devoted husband of 45 years.

It is important for the children and descendants of the Nishimuta family to know about their family medical history. The Nishimutas are prone to heart attacks and strokes, probably from their mother's side. All of the five sons have had heart attacks, clogged arteries, or strokes. Sister Mary passed away in 1994 from a massive heart attack, as had her mother. My father, Paul, had a stroke that has left him debilitated for 20 years.

After the end of World War II, in the early fifties and sixties, the Nishimuta families, like many of their generation, were getting married and raising children. Sadly, also during those happy years, Kutaro, and then his wife, Louisa, passed away. It was joy mixed with sorrow. The Nishimuta family, although not a typical Japanese American family of the time, had some similarities to the Japanese communities on the West Coast.

All of the sons, except Father Jim, served in the military, and three of the four used the GI Bill to go to college when they returned home from the war. Although the family was very poor, the men could gain a college education to help them move up into the middle-class. Grace and Margaret also married men who either served or were still in the armed forces.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

Valerie Matsumoto, in *Farming the Home Place*, agrees with Gary Okihiro that the “rural dimension of Asian American Studies remains a ‘fallow field,’ uncultivated yet rich with possibilities, the ascendancy of the urban model and tyranny of the city have obscured the view of the importance of the Japanese farming family.” Matsumoto goes on to say that in 1925, 46 percent of the employed Japanese worked in farming, close to half of the working Japanese American population (Matsumoto, 1993, p. 11).

Farming is a traditional Japanese occupation as rice is the mainstay of the Japanese diet, and vegetables are eaten more than meat. It is not surprising then, given the vast amount of land in this country, that many Issei who came to America chose farming as their main source of income. Earlier in the century, it was helpful to have a large family, when more hands meant more help with the crops and farm animals. The Industrial Revolution and the onset of corporate agribusiness have practically destroyed the economics of the farm family. The importance of research and oral history on Japanese or other farming families is urgent now more than ever.

The Nishimutas were a unique multicultural family. Kutarō and Louisa were first generation immigrants who came from Japan in 1905 and Spain in 1913. They came from two different worlds, literally two different continents. Both of these culturally diverse people were very strong individuals. They were very brave to come by themselves, singly and alone, to a new country where a different language was spoken. They had to leave all their friends and family behind, never to see them again.

At first, Kutaro chose a typical Issei occupation, working on the railroads with other Japanese men. However, unlike most Issei, he went to college, learned about the automobile, and became a successful chauffeur. When Kutaro and Louisa dated in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1914 they were shunned by their employer and lost their jobs because Mrs. Hamilton did not approve of their relationship. The anti-miscegenation law in Nebraska forced the couple to wed across the state line, in Iowa.

Kutaro was intelligent and used his Japanese friends to help him. After Kutaro and Louisa were married, Kutaro found Tom Shimachi in Oklahoma. Kutaro moved his family to Cushing, Oklahoma, where he worked for Shimachi for six years. Kutaro learned how to farm successfully in the prairie region. Because Kutaro and Louisa chose a good piece of property to farm, one that had good well water on it, they did not lose their land during the Great Depression, unlike many other Oklahoman farmers. But as a working class family, the Nishimutas had to struggle just to survive.

The Nishimuta family persevered through the Great Depression; their hard work and smart use of their resources paid off. They canned fruit and vegetables to save food for the lean times. The boys and their father hunted small game animals to supplement their diet. They raised farm animals for meat and eggs, they had chickens, pigs, and cows which they slaughtered and smoked. All of the children worked on the farm after school to help the family survive. The girls would usually help their mother cook for the five boys and their father, who worked in the fields. The girls would help at harvest time to pick and pack delicate fruit. The Nishimutas were so successful during the Depression, they were able to hire other men and women to help them on the farm.

The Nishimuta family was atypical of most Japanese, in that they settled in the Great Plains state of Oklahoma, during the early 1910s when there were only a few other Japanese farming families scattered in small pockets throughout the state. This was an advantage to the family when the U.S. entered World War II in 1941. Because of where they lived, the Nishimuta family was very fortunate they were not interned during the war, unlike the Japanese on the West Coast. The Nishimuta family heard about what was happening to other Japanese through newspapers and the radio. The Nishimuta family did know of another Japanese family from Oklahoma, the Tomoros, who were in California at the wrong time and were put in the internment camps.

The Nishimuta family was deeply impacted by WWII. Three of their sons were drafted, Joe, Frank, and Paul. Two sons, Joe and Paul, were sent overseas to fight with the 442nd all Japanese Combat Unit. Paul received a Bronze Star for Bravery during WWII. The Nishimuta family experienced prejudice and name calling throughout the war. Two family friends, the local sheriff and a prominent lawyer, helped the family with letters of recommendation, which Kutaro kept on his person throughout the war. Kutaro feared that his money would be confiscated during the war and took his life savings out of the bank and hid it in the cellar. Kutaro, his wife Louisa, and the whole family had many fears during the war.

Although the Nishimuta children were only half Japanese and American citizens, they were treated as Japanese foreigners by the United States government during World War II. These interviews show that the Nishimutas' minority status as Asians was difficult for this family. Robert said, "Being a minority was a real problem for me until I

was about 40 years old” (Robert Nishimuta, interview, October, 2000). This family had to face racial prejudice and name calling while they lived in Oklahoma during World War II. They were watched over carefully by the people in town and were labeled the enemy of their own country, as were other Japanese Americans during the war.

Evelyn Nakano Glenn emphasized that after the internment of the Japanese during the war, almost all of the West Coast farmers lost their lands. Many of the small farming families on the West Coast had to move to more urban areas to work. “Most of the small parcels owned by Japanese truck farmers were consolidated into larger holdings under the control of corporations who hired managers to farm the land” (Glenn, 1986, p. 80). It is a testament to their strength and endurance that the Nishimuta family has been able to keep their farming business in Oklahoma through three generations, up to the present day.

Socially, the Nishimuta family made friends at school and through the Catholic Church. The Nishimutas, unlike the Cortez and Hood River Issei, did not have a large Japanese community to connect with; they lacked Japanese cultural influences. The Nishimutas were isolated because they did not have any extended family around, yet they managed to make friends like Emma Souther who helped them. Unfortunately, the Nishimutas did not have grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins in this country. Margaret said that this was sometimes difficult for the family during holidays, when they saw their friends going to visit other family members. But this isolation also helped the Nishimuta family maintain close bonds, and keeping in touch with relatives is very important now.

As Catholics, the celebration of holidays was a family affair. Christmas and Easter were the most important days for family reunions.

Six of the eight Nishimuta siblings married Caucasians, an outmarriage rate of 100%. The other two children, Sister Mary and Father Jim, took vows of chastity for God, becoming a Maryknoll sister and priest, respectively. Of the Nishimuta siblings eligible to marry, all four men and two women married Caucasians, therefore they were much more assimilated into American society than other Nisei, whose outmarriage rate was only 50% (Kitano, 1993, p. 128).

Because of their isolation from large Japanese communities, and their strong integration with the Caucasian community, the Nishimuta children made friends and found acceptance with most whites. Because all the Nishimuta siblings married Caucasians, all the children and grandchildren of Kutaro and Louisa are multicultural, mixed Japanese, Spanish, white, and other races. This is a growing trend in America, with racial integration, cultural diversity, and the immigration of many different races.

In American society, interracial couples are not new. There has been a large amount of literature written on this subject and my research adds to that knowledge. On the mainland, with so many distinctly White, Black, Asian, or Mexican people, interracial children stand out. For multicultural people, there can be a sense of not belonging to any one race or culture, what Gloria Anzaldua dubbed, the “New Mestiza, she learns to juggle cultures, she has one foot in and one foot out of both cultures” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 79).

I conclude, based on my research, that their strong religious beliefs had a great deal of influence on the family's survival and personal fortitude. Louisa Lorenzo was the spiritual matriarch of the Nishimuta family. She helped her husband convert to Catholicism and later her children would all be strong believers, so much so that their eldest daughter, Mary, became a Maryknoll sister, and, one of their younger sons, James, became a Maryknoll father. Both of these religious leaders remained faithful to their vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience their entire lives, which is a very strong legacy to their mother's faith. The other six children were very involved with church events and activities. Most of the men joined the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal order. A majority of their children and grandchildren are still leaders in the Catholic Church and in other religions such as Scientology and Protestant churches. To believe in God represents an intellectual search for spiritual fulfillment, religion brings order to a chaotic and dangerous world. The Nishimutas were also different from the Japanese on the West Coast because they were Catholic, most other Japanese were either Buddhists or Protestants.

Because they wanted to learn more about their relatives in Japan, the sisters Margaret and Grace traveled from Dallas, Texas, and Lincoln, Nebraska to Izumi City, Japan. In 1980, Grace and Margaret flew into Tokyo where their second cousin Tomako Harai met them at the airport. From Tokyo they flew to Kagoshima, on the southernmost island of Kyushu. From there, Father Jim, Grace and Margaret drove for an hour and 30 minutes to Izumi City, where their father Kutaro was born.

While in Izumi City, the visiting Nishimutas stayed at the home of Yukiti, the eldest son of Kutaro's oldest brother. While at the family home, Margaret met Sue Tateno, who is Margaret's aunt, her father's sister. Margaret wrote in her diary, "Yukiti reminded me of dad. He resembled him in his build, facial features and mannerisms. It was almost like seeing dad again, I felt a close kinship with him. Yukiti has a quiet, dignified way, a love for nature, gardening, and flowers. He is very neat and orderly. A patient, honest, and good man, dad had all these same interests and qualities." Margaret said that the Tateno family was very gracious and generous to them. She enjoyed her visit very much. Of course Margaret and Grace could not speak Japanese, but Father Jim served as the interpreter. While she was in Japan, Margaret bought a kimono. She showed me a picture of her wearing it, and she looks just like a Japanese lady.

Margaret says that she wasn't really interested in her heritage until she was well grown up. When she started her interest in her father's culture, she began taking Japanese art classes. She took Ikebana, which is Japanese flower arranging, and Japanese brush painting. Margaret is very artistic and creative. It is known that her father did some painting. Margaret looks and acts like a Japanese woman, she is quiet and reserved, yet very intelligent and friendly when you speak to her. She has a small garden in her backyard, where she grows vegetables such as onions, strawberries, and beans. Margaret has some beautiful flowers, including roses, in her nicely landscaped yard.

All of the eight Nishimuta siblings have either farms or gardens, it is a common interest they share. The care and attention they give to nurturing plants and flowers is a family trait. Robert and his wife Louise owned a flower shop for many years. They now

take care of plants at restaurants. The Nishimuta siblings also enjoy being outside with nature. Joe, his sons and their families still run the family farm near Cushing. They harvest many vegetables every year. Frank has some acreage near his home in McAlester, Oklahoma, and grows enough tomatoes to send them to the farmers' market. Frank has also taught agriculture classes for the university; he is very knowledgeable about tomatoes and their different varieties. Father Jim has a summer home next to Frank, where he grows peaches and cans them himself. My father, Paul, always had a vegetable garden, he grew cherry tomatoes, carrots, strawberries, and eggplant. The participants in this study enjoy growing vegetables. It is a relaxing and meditative experience for them, similar to Japanese bonsai.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from John Donne of the 1600s, "No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." What he meant by this is that every person is affected by the larger society. Everyone in America was affected by the events of September 11, 2001. And in the past all of the Japanese in America were profoundly affected by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. As a society, we are all intricately laced together; what affects one affects us all.

APPENDIX A

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your full name? Where were you born?
2. What year, month, and day were you born?
3. How and when did your father immigrate from Japan?
4. What was your father's personality like, what habits did he have?
5. Did your father understand English?
6. What was your mother's personality like?
7. When did your mother immigrate from Spain? How did your parents meet?
8. What did your mother like to do in her spare time?
9. Did your mother have any problems learning English?
10. What holidays did your family celebrate? How did they celebrate?
11. Did your family always have electricity? When did you get it?
12. Did you always have indoor plumbing? When did you get it?
13. What crops did your family farm?
14. What kinds of chores and responsibilities did you have when you were young?
15. What did your family eat on the farm?
16. Did your parents prepare special cultural foods?
17. What community activities did your family participate in?
18. What are your favorite memories of growing up on the farm?
19. What social events did you remember going to?
20. What schools did you attend?

21. What did you do after high school?
22. Did you go to college? Where did you go and what did you study?
23. What are your memories of the Great Depression?
24. What did your family do to survive the Depression?
25. How did you hear about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
26. How did you feel about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
27. How did Pearl Harbor affect you and your family?
28. Did you experience any racism during WWII?
29. What did you do during World War II?
30. How did you meet your spouse? How many children and grandchildren do you have?
31. What role has religion played in your life?
32. How has being a multicultural person affected your life?

APPENDIX B

Kutaro Nishimuta's First Diary, 1907

Jan 1, 1907

San Francisco, New Years Eve, Went out to eat and drink. Came home at 4 a.m.

Jan 2, 1907

Went to English class, ate at Episcopal Church Mission. Bought an English book for 75 cents. Tobacco, 5 cents, bread, 5 cents, matches, 5 cents. Cost him 20 cents to take a bath.

Bought a lot of candy, tobacco, meals cost 15 cents. Went to Church frequently at Episcopal Mission. Bought a watch for \$1.50. Met his friend Fujimoto. Bought a white coat. Laundry cost 10 cents. Went to dentist frequently. Had to go to consular to get a certificate to live in U.S.

Began to study the Bible, always got home at 4 p.m.

Bought socks for 10 cents, toothpaste for 5 cents. Went to church and read Bible frequently. Did his cleaning on Saturday. Wrote his brothers. Visited Japanese section to take hot baths. Room rent \$3.00. Bath 20 cents.

Feb 15, 1907

Japanese Holiday, Went to the beach. Received a letter and pictures from his younger brother in Japan. Was treated to a Chinese meal.

Haircut 25 cents, Salary was 3 yen.

Spent his time going to school, working, studying Bible and visiting with his friend Fujimoto.

March, 1907

Went to church to meet his friend Fujimoto. Studied the "Holy Bible". Bought a knife for 75 cents. Paid his rent, \$3.00 a month.

Each day the same schedule. Decided to go to Nebraska. Saving money to go to Omaha.

Had a farewell party.

March 9, 1907

Getting ready to leave for Omaha. Got on train at 7:30 to go to Nebraska. Crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Snow was very deep.

Spamelse, Nevada (got off train and went to church). Bought a paper. Go back on train.

March 13, 1907

Going to work on railroad. Reads at night.

March 14, 1907

Working on railroad. Borrowed money for cigarettes and soap. Didn't have time to write while working on railroad. Kept track of weather, work, and expenses.

Recorded trouble on the railroad. No work for 2 days.

A letter came from his friend Fujimoto.

He worked 13 days and 7 hours and received salary of \$19.93.

There was a train wreck. Company took \$4.00 for food.

April 1, 1907

Worked for 10 hours. Bought cigarettes, paper. Met new friend. Had Sundays off.

Received letters frequently from Fujimoto. Finally wrote to Fujimoto.

Transferred to another railroad gang.

April 10, 1907

Went through Salt Lake City, Utah. Went to work at 5 a.m.

April 17, 1907

Went to Promontory Point, Utah. Received letters from Japanese friends. Borrowed money from Railroad Company Store to buy post cards. Went to a play for 20 cents. Went sightseeing in Ogden, Utah. Treated 3 friends to dinner, cost 45 cents. Bought stomach medicine. At end of April received \$35.00 in wages. Paid his debt at company store.

Working his way to Omaha. \$1.25 for hotel room.

May 2, 1907

Crossed the Rocky Mountains.

May 3, 1907

Reached Omaha, Nebraska. Stayed at Omaha Hotel. Fujimoto was in Omaha. Sightseeing. Bought new shoes \$3.00. Gloves, \$1.00, Undershirt 90 cents.

May 5, 1907

Sunday, rested, went to play, 50 cents, lunch 50 cents, orange 25 cents. Still working with railroad gang. Didn't write much while working.

May 12, 1907

Strong winds, day off, Sunday. Wrote to family in Kyushu. Wrote to Episcopal Church. Wrote his friends frequently.

May 19, 1907

Did his laundry, Monday, back to work. Eggs, 15 cents. Worked 3 hours overtime.

Received half day's wages. Bought beef. Worked overtime often. Watch repair, 30 cents.

Watch chain, 5 cents, matches, 5 cents.

June 1, 1907

Worked overtime. Bought pipe, fish hooks, 4 cents, fishing pole, 25 cents. Went fishing with friends. Worked all week. Off when it rained. Off on Sunday. Storm with lightening and thunder. Bought more underclothes, stockings, 25 cents, shirt, leggings, 15 cents.

Whiskey, 75 cents, with his friends. Hat, 10 cents. Received a letter from his oldest brother. Soap, 25 cents, tablet, 5 cents, Sake and meat \$2.50.

July, 1907

Stamps, \$1.00, company hospital, 50 cents.

July 4, 1907

Holiday, went to Beaver Park. One dozen eggs, 14 cents. Sent a letter to his brothers.

Received a letter from his brothers.

Working overtime. Six bottles of lemonade, one pair overalls, 80 cents. Worked on Sunday for overtime. Salary for July \$43.00.

August 1, 1907

Had trouble with the foreman, so didn't work until the end of the term, was changed to another gang. Sent \$100 to his friend Fujimoto, 40 cents to send it. Spent \$3.00 on application. Shirt, 50 cents, soda water 5 cents, sausage, 40 cents.

Off during the day. A train went off the track, so he had to go back to work. Working 11

hours a day. Pickled plums, 25 cents. Received and sent a lot of letters. Played pool. Still working on the railroad. First time he ate in a restaurant. Worked on train wrecks.

Worked all night. Received overtime. Buttons, 10 cents, sugar, 5 cents, watermelon, 5 cents.

August 24, 1907

Worked and played pool. Loaned a friend \$10. August salary \$42.00. Sent 109 yen to his older brother, who paid for his education. Shoes, \$2.50, overshirt, \$1.00, underwear, \$1.00, food \$2.00.

September 1, 1907

Fujimoto came for a visit. Beer, 5 cents.

September 7, 1907

Worked 2 hours overtime. Changed work gang. Covington gang.

September 17, 1907

Another train wreck in Covington.

September 21, 1907

First frost, total salary for September, \$52.00. Company took \$4.18 for food.

Continued to buy candy, stamps, and eggs.

October 1, 1907

Collar, 25 cents, shirt, \$1.00, fee, \$2.90.

October 2, 1907

Headed for Omaha. Stayed in Morihama Hotel. \$2.90 for 2 days work.

October 3, 1907

Visited Fujimoto.

October 11, 1907

Went to Armour Co. to see about a job. Had promise of a job at Armour Canning Co. Laundry, 35 cents. Bought paper, (rolled his own) and tobacco. Working at Armour Co. part-time. Corresponding frequently with Fujimoto. Donated 25 cents to building of the Armenian Church. Corresponded with Kasomeshi. Working 11 hours a day, plus overtime. Songbook, 25 cents. Beer, 15 cents, gum, 10 cents, borrowed a pair of thongs. Salary for 2 weeks 22.00.

November, 1907

Watch repair \$1.50, sheets, \$1.00, movies, 40 cents, car fare, 5 cents. Case of sweet wine (borrowed) for November 3, Emperor's birthday, celebrated it in south Omaha with Japanese friends by eating, drinking beer, singing and dancing. Pool, 5 cents. No work, went home depressed. Theater, 20 cents. Rode trolley. Book, 12 cents.

November 10, 1907

First snow. Continued to work, drink beer, buy food, smoke. A friend died, went to wake, bought incense. 2 weeks work, \$12.25. Received back pay. Received letters from oldest brother. Hard cider, 15 cents.

Thanksgiving Day

Day off, sweets, 10 cents.

December 1, 1907

Worked, drank beer, smoked, went to theater. Wrote New Year's cards to family and

friends. Paid company store \$13.75 for food. Went to public bath.

Christmas Day

Went to a friend's home. Bought beer, apple, gum, envelopes, paper for painting, went to theater. Sent \$51.00 to his brother Martarami.

New Year's Eve

Had chop suey and went to theater. Bath, 25 cents. Saved 131.73 for the year. Paid debts, 109.73 left at end of 1907.

May 11, 1908

Omaha, Nebraska. I got up at six o'clock, breakfast and did house cleaning, at night took a walk for a little. I worked as usual during the day, at night studied a little, and went to bed. I was up earlier than usual, but there was not many things to do, so I could study for many hours and at night learned English by Mrs. Nichol.

There is not as much work as I would like, at night we had a good time with the girls. I drew my picture from before noon and after noon I went downtown with Mrs. Miller to get goods. Roomed with Miss Ada Miller, 1908

2709 Farnam Street

Omaha, Nebraska

(Editor's note, there is a break in time from 1908-1914. There might have been another diary during those years that was thrown away.)

February 22, 1914

Went to Orpheum Theater with Patricino (Louisa). Got home at 10:30 p.m.

May 11, 1914

(Began underlining Patricino's name in his diary.) Stayed out until 12:00 p.m.

Also going out with Hilda (a German woman). Dating Hilda and Louisa.

July 12, 1914

Meets Hilda at 12:00 p.m. and they said good-bye. She moved to Lincoln.

July 23, 1914

Went shopping and to park with Louisa. Meeting every day.

July 26, 1914

Went to church together. Went to the Hamilton's house and told her good-bye, she went on a trip.

August 4, 1914

Hilda wrote and said they were through.

August 9, 1914

Sent Hilda a postcard. Received a letter from Hilda every 2 days.

August 20, 1914

Louisa comes back. He goes downtown and to park with Louisa, accompanied by Florence. Got home at 11:30.

August 26, 1914

Talked in park (with Louisa) until 11 p.m. When he got home he had a letter from Hilda. Went to movies on Sunday.

September 1, 1914

Had a postcard from Hilda.

September 3, 1914

Go shopping with a friend. Continues to receive letters from Hilda. Taking Louisa out frequently to movies, shopping, and the park.

September 13, 1914

Went to church with Louisa and to look for a room for Louisa. Had supper together. Took her back to Hamilton's house. Continued to see Louisa frequently. (Apparently Louisa moved from the Hamilton's into another house.)

Went to River View Park with Louisa. Went with her to look for a job. Went to barber. Went to Louisa's house but she wasn't there so he went home.

September 24, 1914

Barber again. Had supper and went to see Louisa.

September 26, 1914

Went shopping and met Oista. Sunday, stayed in room until 3 p.m. Went out with Louisa, took her to movies. Took her home. Went out again.

Went with Louisa to look for a job. Took her to carnival.

October 1, 1914

Working and staying at home. Chauffeuring, continuing to go with Louisa. Went to see electric trolley. Seeing Louisa almost every day.

October 13, 1914

Received a letter from older brother. Barber and seeing Louisa. Shopping. Hilda continues to write. I still see Louisa frequently.

November 15, 1914

Goes to Brandies Theater with Louisa. Went to dinner with the barber.

Christmas Eve, 1914

Took Louisa to church and home. Helped with Christmas dinner (probably at the Hamilton's). Louisa came to house for dinner.

New Year's Eve, 1914

Had dinner with the barber.

Editor's Note: by Aunt Mary.

Mother and dad lived in Oconee, Nebraska (close to Columbus, Nebraska) when they were first married. This is where they met Emma Souther. Her husband was Harry B. Souther. They have 3 children, Bernice lives in Warren. Coon was a small town. Harry Souther was head of the railroad depot.

Dad and mother moved to Oklahoma to farm in 1917.

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