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Guide to the Japanese-American Association of Lane County, Oregon, Oral History Collection, 1994-2008

Title

Japanese-American Association of Lane County, Oregon, Oral History Collection (OH 15)

Dates

1994-2008 (inclusive)
2006-2008 (bulk)

Creator

Japanese-American Association of Lane County, Oregon.

Summary

The Japanese-American Association of Lane County, Oregon, Oral History Collection consists of digital recordings of oral history interviews of Japanese Americans living in Eugene, Lane County, Oregon, and the vicinity. These oral histories document the immigrant experiences of the interviewees' parents and grandparents; the World War II experiences of the interviewees in internment camps; and their lives in Eugene and neighboring communities in the years following the war.

Quantity

0.15 cubic foot, including 2 DVDs (1 box) and 109 sound files, 49 image files, and 12 document files (11 Gbytes)

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research.

Language

Materials in English and Japanese.

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Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Nielsen and Elizabeth M. Uhlig, 2009.

Historical Note

The Japanese American Association of Lane County, Oregon, includes members of Japanese descent living in Eugene, on the Oregon Coast, and elsewhere in Lane County and the vicinity. The Association was instrumental in development of the Japanese American Memorial Project in Eugene as a public reminder of the internment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II.

Most of the individuals interviewed as part of this oral history project grew up in Hawaii or California before moving to Oregon.

Alice Endo Aikens was born in Oakland, California in 1942. Her grandparents immigrated from Japan to the United States, and her parents ran an Asian grocery store in Chinatown in Oakland. Her extended family avoided forced evacuation by moving to Utah in 1942. She graduated from college in Utah and moved to Eugene in 1969 with her husband who taught at the University of Oregon. Alice was a program coordinator in the instruction department of the Eugene 4-J School District. She has been active as a volunteer and leader at the University of Oregon's Museum of Natural and Cultural History. She was a leader of the Eugene Japanese-American Memorial Committee and is an organizer of the annual Day of Remembrance in February.

Artist Kenge Kobayashi depicted the concepts of justice, perseverance, and honor in three paintings that are installed as panels on standing stones in the Japanese American Memorial Project. Kobayashi was born in 1926 in Imperial Valley, California where his parents, who immigrated from Japan in 1905, had a farm. In 1942 they lived in internment camps, first in the Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona for one year, and then in the Tule Lake Relocation Center in California until 1945. The family resettled in California where Kenge studied art and graphic design at the Art Center School in Pasadena. He served in the army for two years during the Korean War. He worked for an advertising company in Chicago for eleven years and eventually moved back to California. With his first wife he had seven children; after her death he remarried and following his retirement he moved to Eugene in 1989. He taught painting in Eugene and was active in Japanese-American community organizations.

Miya Kaneko Kobayashi was born in Crystal City, Texas. Her parents had immigrated from Japan to Peru where they operated an import/export business. The family was forced by the American and Peruvian governments to relocate to a camp in Crystal City where they lived for the remainder of World War II. After the war Miya, her four siblings, and her parents lived in New Jersey for a short time eventually settling near San Diego, California. She has three children from her first marriage. After marrying Kenge Kobayashi, she moved to Eugene in 1989 and continues to work in a construction company. She is an avid quilter.

Mitzi Asai Loftus was born in Hood River, Oregon. Her parents immigrated from Japan and owned and operated fruit orchards in Hood River. Her father was forced to sell his property after he was sent to the internment camps. She was in the fourth grade when World War II began and her family was sent to the Pinedale Assembly Center in Fresno, California, and later to internment camps in Tule Lake, California, and Heart Mountain, Wyoming. In April 1945, the family returned to Hood River where Mitzi finished school. When she was in the ninth grade, she changed her name from Mitsuko to Mitzi. She attended the University of Oregon and studied education. She taught at schools in Oregon for 47 years. She taught English in Japan on a Fulbright scholarship. She has written a book, *Made in Japan and Settled in Oregon* about her family's history and experiences during World War II. She frequently gives presentations about the internment camps and her life as a Japanese-American in Oregon.

Yoko Matsuoka McClain was born in Tokyo in 1924. Her maternal grandfather was the writer Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), well-known for his novels, short stories, and poetry. Yoko lived in Tokyo during World War II and graduated from Tsuda College, a woman's college, in 1945. She worked as a translator during the American Occupation following World War II. She received a GARIOA (Government Aid for Relief in Occupied Areas) grant, which is now called Fulbright, and traveled to the U.S. for her university studies. She graduated with a BA in French in 1956 and an MA in Comparative Literature in 1967 from the University of Oregon (UO). She taught Japanese at the University of Oregon from 1964 to 1994, when she became Professor Emerita. McClain has written extensively and frequently lectures in Japan, Europe, and the U.S. Her husband, Robert McClain, collected Japanese prints; the McClain Printmaking Supplies continues to be a leading supplier of printmaking materials. Yoko has donated Japanese prints to the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon in the memory of her husband.

Edward T. Miyakawa was born in Sacramento, California, in 1934. His grandfathers had immigrated from Japan and had a strawberry and grape farm and other businesses. His father graduated from Harvard University in the 1920s. His family (parents and two sisters) were forced to relocate to the Tule Lake Relocation Camp in 1942. After a year, they settled in Colorado and eventually moved back to California. Ed served in the Navy during the Korean War, 1952-1956, and lived in Japan for two years. He graduated from the University of California in 1962 with a major in architecture. He and his wife moved to Oregon and settled in Waldport where he practiced architecture for thirty years. In 1979 he wrote a book, *Tule Lake*, about experiences in the relocation camp. He served on the Japanese American Memorial committee in Eugene.

Chiyo Mori was born in Stockton, California, in 1921 and grew up in Sacramento. Her parents immigrated from Aichi prefecture in Japan and ran a hotel in Stockton. She attended Sacramento Junior College and studied at the Hazmore School of Fashion in San Francisco. She was interned first at Tule Lake where she taught sewing and pattern making, and later at Amache in Colorado. After leaving the camp, she lived in New York City for a year and then Denver, where she worked as a pattern maker. After marrying Perry Mori in 1949, they eventually settled in Albuquerque where her husband taught at the University of New Mexico. After he retired in 1982, they traveled extensively and eventually moved to Eugene in 2007.

Perry Mori was born in Watsonville, California, in 1921. His parents had immigrated from Japan in 1902-1903 and worked on farms in Watsonville. Perry attended Salinas Junior College in 1939-1941 and received his AA degree in the Salinas Assembly Center where the family was initially interned. He was in the Tule Lake Camp until 1943 when he went to Chicago. He was drafted into the Army in 1944 and was an interpreter for the American Occupation in Japan. He attended Northwestern University and received a BA in Business Administration and an MBA in 1950. He was the first Japanese-American professor at the University of New Mexico where he taught Accounting in the Business Department until his retirement in 1982. He received a law degree in 1965. He met his wife, Chiyo, in the Amache Camp in Colorado; they were married in 1949 and have two children. They moved to Eugene in 2007.

Ken Nagao was born in Hawaii and came to Eugene to attend the University of Oregon in the 1960s. He studied architecture and his firm, Nagao Pacific Architectural PC, has designed numerous homes and buildings in the area. He was a founder of the Asian Celebration and has been active in the Asian Kite Festival, Eugene Taiko, and the Japanese-American Association. His interests include hunting, ukulele and Hawaiian music, kites, pottery, travel, cooking, and entertaining.

Hiroshi Ogawa was born and raised in Pasadena, California, in 1941. His family was interned in Gila Bend, Arizona, for four years. He went to college at the University of California at Santa Barbara where he first started making pottery, graduating in 1963. He taught pottery in public schools until 1969 when he went to Japan to study Buddhism and pottery. He met his wife, Keiko, in Japan and after returning to California in 1972, he set up a studio in Carmel Valley. They eventually moved to Elkton, Oregon in 1981. Since then he has operated his pottery studio and built a hikarigama, a wood fired kiln. He has built a community of potters who share in the experience of firing the kiln.

David Toyama was born on Kauai in Hawaii, where his parents settled after their immigration from Japan. David was a teenager when World War II broke out in 1942. He later joined the Army and served in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). He and his wife Jean lived in Japan for seventeen years while he worked for MIS. After retiring from the military, he worked for the Tax Service in Eugene. He has been active in Japanese-American community organizations and was a founder of the Japanese-American Association, the Asian Council, and the Asian Celebration. He earned a BS degree from Linfield College.

Content Description

The Japanese-American Association of Lane County, Oregon, Oral History Collection documents oral history interviews, conducted in 2006-2008, of Japanese Americans living in Eugene and Lane County, Oregon as well as Elkton (Douglas County) and Waldport (Lincoln County). The collection includes digital sound recordings, transcripts of two interviews, interview questions, releases, biographical and background information, digital photographs, and related documentation and correspondence. Extensive biographical information for Yoko McClain and Hiroshi Ogawa, including DVDs about Ogawa's pottery making and studio, are part of the collection.

Interviews of the following 11 individuals are included in the collection: Alice Endo Aikens, Kenge Kobayashi, Miya Kobayashi, Mitzi Asai Loftus, Yoko McClain, Edward Miyakawa, Chiyo Mori, Perry Mori, Kenneth Takeo Nagao, Hiroshi Ogawa, and David K. Toyama.

This oral history project focused on the immigrant experiences of the parents and grandparents of the interviewees who were the issei (first generations) who came to the United States from Japan; the World War II experiences of the interviewees; and their lives in Eugene and neighboring communities as they moved there in the decades following the war and built a Japanese-American community.

Many of the interviewees describe their experiences in World War II relocation camps at Tule Lake (California), Crystal City (Texas), and other camps and detention centers during the forced removal of Japanese-Americans from the West Coast. Some of the interviewees describe their experiences living in Hawaii during the war. They also describe the experiences of the immigrant generations (their parents and grandparents) who were the first to settle in the United States. They discuss their lives in Oregon as they relocated in the decades after World War II. The interviews document the growth and development of the Japanese-American community and the establishment of community organizations, events, and projects such as the Japanese-American Association of Lane County, the Asian Celebration, and the Japanese American Memorial Project in Eugene. The digital photographs depict the subjects at the time the interviews were conducted.

The digital sound recordings will be made available to patrons upon request. The sound recordings are in *.wav, *.wma, and *.mp3 formats. Each interview consists of multiple sound files.

Transcripts are available for the interviews of Kenge Kobayashi and Mitzi Asai Loftus. The collection also includes a summary (tape log) and list of questions for the Kenge Kobayashi interview. Questions for the interviews with Miya Kobayashi, Yoko McClain, Ed Miyakawa, Chiyo and Perry Mori, Kenneth Takeo Nagao, Hiroshi Ogawa, and David Toyama are also part of the collection. Transcripts of these interviews are not available.

The interviews were conducted by Elizabeth Uhlig and Susan Hirata. The interview of Mitzi Asai Loftus was transcribed by Elizabeth Kodama.

Preferred Citation

Japanese-American Association of Lane County, Oregon, Oral History Collection (OH 15), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Acquisition Information

The materials were donated to the Archives by the Japanese-American Association of Lane County, Oregon, in 2008.

Processing Note

This collection is not fully processed; this guide is preliminary.

Related Material

This oral history collection is a component of the [Oregon Multicultural Archives](#), which documents the lives and activities of African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American communities of Oregon. The [Extension Bulletin Illustrations Photograph Collection](#) includes images of the relocation of Japanese-Americans living in Oregon during World War II.

Subjects

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the OSU Libraries Catalog. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog (<http://oasis.oregonstate.edu>) using these headings.

Organizations

Crystal City Internment Camp (Crystal City, Tex.)
Tule Lake Relocation Center (Calif.)

Topics

Japanese Americans--Oregon--Interviews.
Japanese Americans--Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945.

Geographical Names

Eugene (Or.)

Forms of Materials in the Collection

DVDs.

Digital photographs.

Oral histories (document genres)

Other Creators

Aikens, Alice Endo.

Hirata, Susan Kukue.

Kobayashi, Kenge.

Kobayashi, Miya Kaneko.

Kodama, Elizabeth.

Loftus, Mitzi Asai.

McClain, Yoko Matsuoka.

Miyakawa, Edward, 1934-

Mori, Chiyo.

Mori, Perry.

Nagao, Kenneth Takeo.

Ogawa, Hiroshi, 1941-

Toyama, David K.

Uhlig, Elizabeth M.