

Shirley Kuramoto interview
September 08, 2025
De Anza College Winter 2025 quarter
Steve Nava interviewer
Spaces of Belonging Project: Hidden in Plain Site/Sight

Link to interview:

<https://fhda-edu.zoom.us/rec/play/uOO3ZlaydspVcUGmrRt9KnTlz-hcw35Zag1vibOPVUDvNJhJm64OnOOFiM1C8vyWpmKNxdHg5Auj7-al.d4WllL2KWCzqahKs?autoplay=true>

Summary:

In this oral history Shirley Kuramoto (age 92 when this interview took place) shares captivating stories about growing up during the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during WW II under order 9066 when she was age twelve. The intimate details include her feelings of being bullied as a child as a result of the Anti-Japanese American fervor during the war and how her stoic response is a through line in her life that she had to confront in her middle age years. She also shares what it was like attending pro-Japan nationalist school while also simultaneously attending pro-American school in the years of her families incarceration. Kuramoto shares the wisdom she garnered throughout her life and how her philosophy of life transformed and adapted to new social and political moments. She is currently a playwright for the local Red Ladder Theater group which infuses Japanese cultural perspectives and humor to entertain elders at the Yu-Ai Kai senior center and more. Her deep yearning to learn the arts and Asian American and other ethnic histories is deeply inspiring as is her storytelling.

917

01:34:06.150 --> 01:34:09.840

Shirley Kuramoto: Theater Improv workshop

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00:00:04.490 --> 00:00:06.380

Steve Nava: So, firstly, Shirley,

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00:00:06.510 --> 00:00:13.639

Steve Nava: Welcome to De Anza College. I don't know if you've been here before, but it's really nice to have you on campus. Oh, thank you. Having met you, and...

3

00:00:13.970 --> 00:00:17.459

Steve Nava: met you at the [Japanese American museum of San Jose] museum, and you, you know, showed our students the [replica of the] barracks you lived in during WWII. This project

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00:00:28.150 --> 00:00:33.109

Steve Nava: is tied to that, but it's more specifically about

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00:00:33.250 --> 00:00:38.060

Steve Nava: understanding history from everyday people's experience,

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00:00:38.390 --> 00:00:43.080

Steve Nava: getting younger people to understand,

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00:00:43.700 --> 00:00:50.880

Steve Nava: their elders a little bit more in a society that may have been moving away from having a relationship with our elders.

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00:00:51.100 --> 00:00:56.679

Steve Nava: And, kind of bridging the gap between generations, in a sense. All right.

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00:00:56.780 --> 00:01:02.470

Steve Nava: And the title of the project is *Spaces of Belonging Hidden in Plain Sight/ Site*.

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00:01:02.790 --> 00:01:10.420

Steve Nava: And that means that there's a commitment to understanding social places and sites where community is built.

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00:01:10.720 --> 00:01:17.850

Steve Nava: So, Japantown being one area that we're... some of... many of us are familiar with, and you work in that community.

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00:01:18.270 --> 00:01:31.069

Steve Nava: might be asking you questions that are more specific to the place itself, and town, which you don't... I'm not expecting you to be the expert about it, just more like your relationship to a place. All right, I... Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

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00:01:31.180 --> 00:01:32.440

Steve Nava: So,

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00:01:33.560 --> 00:01:41.049

Steve Nava: Other things to know about the project, it is a NEH grant-funded project, National Endowment of the Humanities grant-funded project.

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00:01:41.150 --> 00:01:49.539

Steve Nava: And, it really is... With the intention of trying to secure a better future through these dialogues.

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00:01:51.070 --> 00:01:58.230

Steve Nava: And I'll just introduce myself briefly. I'm Steve Nava, I'm an instructor here at De Anza, 51 years old.

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00:01:58.540 --> 00:02:04.830

Steve Nava: I've been working at De Anza since 2010, and teaching here

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00:02:05.340 --> 00:02:12.130

Steve Nava: And it's become, I guess you would say, a space of belonging for me, an important place for me to build my sense of identity.

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00:02:12.950 --> 00:02:18.220

Steve Nava: And, I want to allow our interviewers to introduce themselves before we start, so...

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00:02:19.040 --> 00:02:26.859

Noemi Teppang: Hi, my name is Noemi Teppang, I'm a counselor here at De Anza College, and happy to be here, excited to hear your story.

21

00:02:28.170 --> 00:02:36.009

Taro Pali: Yeah, my name's Taro Pali, I'm a second year sociology student at De Anza, and yeah, inside...

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00:02:36.760 --> 00:02:46.570

Daniel Baron: Oh, hello, my name is Daniel Baron. I'm 19 years old, and I'm a second year student at De Anza, studying sociology, and I'm really excited for today.

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00:02:47.240 --> 00:02:57.470

Tom Izu: My name's Tom Izu. I'm the past director of the California History Center here at De Anza College, and in my retirement, I'm now involved in the Japanese American Museum of San Jose. Thank you for being here.

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00:02:57.750 --> 00:03:02.909

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm honored to be here. Thank you for inviting me.

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00:03:03.560 --> 00:03:15.500

Shirley Kuramoto: Yeah, so we're going to have a conversation. We have different questions for different individuals in the panel here to ask you. And, first, I just want to allow you to introduce yourself, so...

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00:03:15.620 --> 00:03:21.440

Shirley Kuramoto: If you could share your birth year, your occupation, your ethnicity, and then we could start.

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00:03:23.850 --> 00:03:29.429

Shirley Kuramoto: My name is Shirley Kuramoto. I was named after Shirley Temple.

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00:03:29.740 --> 00:03:32.029

Shirley Kuramoto: My mother loved movies.

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00:03:32.860 --> 00:03:38.780

Shirley Kuramoto: I was born on February 9, 1933, so...

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00:03:39.250 --> 00:03:43.340

Shirley Kuramoto: In other words, in two months, I'll be 92 years old.

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00:03:43.920 --> 00:03:49.029

Shirley Kuramoto: And... I was born in San Jose, California, actually.

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00:03:50.390 --> 00:03:55.650

Shirley Kuramoto: Another thing is that when I was,

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00:03:56.040 --> 00:03:59.240

Shirley Kuramoto: 3 months old, my birth father passed away.

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00:03:59.530 --> 00:04:03.360

Shirley Kuramoto: So, my mother... Remarried.

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00:04:03.660 --> 00:04:13.660

Shirley Kuramoto: And so my stepfather actually became the only father that I have ever known, so I always... I will refer to him as my father.

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00:04:14.650 --> 00:04:18.179

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I'll just stop here.

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00:04:18.880 --> 00:04:22.579

Shirley Kuramoto: Yeah, so what, how would you...

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00:04:22.810 --> 00:04:30.570

Shirley Kuramoto: Could you share a little bit about your family background? Yes. I'll start with my... Own background first.

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00:04:30.690 --> 00:04:36.970

Shirley Kuramoto: I was married for 63 years. My husband passed away a couple years ago.

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00:04:37.360 --> 00:04:39.789

Shirley Kuramoto: And, we had two children.

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00:04:40.060 --> 00:04:44.530

Shirley Kuramoto: We lived, actually, in San Jose.

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00:04:44.930 --> 00:04:57.950

Shirley Kuramoto: I... now I'm retired, and I live in a gated senior community at this moment. I'm still living independently, I still drive.

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00:04:58.240 --> 00:04:59.559

Shirley Kuramoto: And,

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00:05:00.020 --> 00:05:14.570

Shirley Kuramoto: My parents, or not my parents, my children have become my parents. We have reversal in those, have become their little lion cub, so I'm their child now. I'm very fortunate.

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00:05:15.310 --> 00:05:23.959

Shirley Kuramoto: And so, as I said, I've been retired, I would say

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00:05:24.550 --> 00:05:27.420

Shirley Kuramoto: I retired about when I was 80.

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00:05:27.920 --> 00:05:33.880

Shirley Kuramoto: I just kept going on and on, and I think because I was in good, healthy condition.

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00:05:34.700 --> 00:05:39.150

Shirley Kuramoto: And, anything else that I should stop?

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00:05:39.280 --> 00:05:46.150

Shirley Kuramoto: For a moment here. No, can you tell me a little bit about, what you know about your grandparents? Oh, yes.

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00:05:46.340 --> 00:05:50.540

Shirley Kuramoto: I'll start with my father's,

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00:05:51.010 --> 00:05:54.550

Shirley Kuramoto: parents. They came... emigrated from Japan.

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00:05:54.960 --> 00:06:03.050

Shirley Kuramoto: In the early 1900s, the, this grandfather and his wife.

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00:06:03.460 --> 00:06:06.780

Shirley Kuramoto: farmed at Half Moon Bay. They were farmers.

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00:06:07.100 --> 00:06:13.659

Shirley Kuramoto: And then they called for their son, my father. He came here when he was seventeen years old.

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00:06:14.700 --> 00:06:20.599

Shirley Kuramoto: What happened eventually, of course, he came to help his parents do the farming.

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00:06:20.750 --> 00:06:24.840

Shirley Kuramoto: What happened was, he met somebody so...

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00:06:25.060 --> 00:06:34.050

Shirley Kuramoto: professor's... Stanford professor's son, who knew how to fly an airplane. So my father learned to fly a single

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00:06:34.190 --> 00:06:35.860

Shirley Kuramoto: engine airplane.

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00:06:36.150 --> 00:06:42.200

Shirley Kuramoto: And he started flying all over the place. Which angered his father.

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00:06:42.930 --> 00:06:47.580

Shirley Kuramoto: The father said, you better come home right away, because your mother is dying.

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00:06:47.960 --> 00:06:54.340

Shirley Kuramoto: So my father, after he had acquired a lot of aviation books, came back.

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00:06:55.340 --> 00:07:04.750

Shirley Kuramoto: To his angry father, and the father confiscated all his aviation books, and burn them all.

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00:07:05.480 --> 00:07:11.670

Shirley Kuramoto: That kind of surprised me, because this grandfather was quite intelligent. He was a farmer.

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00:07:11.800 --> 00:07:18.889

Shirley Kuramoto: However, he got a U.S. patent for left and a right signal

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00:07:19.050 --> 00:07:23.930

Shirley Kuramoto: patent, U.S. patent, so he's quite, you know, intelligent.

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00:07:24.280 --> 00:07:27.930

Shirley Kuramoto: the father's parents went back to Japan.

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00:07:29.120 --> 00:07:32.569

Shirley Kuramoto: And then left the son, my father.

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00:07:32.940 --> 00:07:36.210

Shirley Kuramoto: My father had experiences

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00:07:36.380 --> 00:07:43.690

Shirley Kuramoto: working, with the Chinese laborers, laying the railroad track. I don't know where...

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00:07:44.120 --> 00:07:46.870

Shirley Kuramoto: this happened. All I know is that

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00:07:47.370 --> 00:07:55.879

Shirley Kuramoto: he said that he and the Chinese laborers never had stomach aches because they boiled the hot water.

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00:07:56.200 --> 00:08:00.320

Shirley Kuramoto: and drank tea. The others all had stomach problems.

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00:08:00.950 --> 00:08:05.769

Shirley Kuramoto: And, then eventually, he became a gardener.

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00:08:06.310 --> 00:08:09.469

Shirley Kuramoto: He became a gardener for Mrs. Pullman.

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00:08:09.580 --> 00:08:15.430

Shirley Kuramoto: Mrs. Pullman is part of a famous Pullman family that

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00:08:15.570 --> 00:08:21.840

Shirley Kuramoto: You hear of the Pullman cars, the railroad, passenger cars, Pullman.

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00:08:22.480 --> 00:08:26.589

Shirley Kuramoto: She led him... in Menlo Park.

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00:08:27.710 --> 00:08:36.159

Shirley Kuramoto: There was a cottage behind this giant, big house. This was really in the Horse Country Club area.

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00:08:36.419 --> 00:08:42.600

Shirley Kuramoto: in Menlo Park, and she had a cottage in the back, so he was able to live there.

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00:08:43.400 --> 00:08:51.509

Shirley Kuramoto: Now, I'll talk about my mother's side. My mother was born here in California.

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00:08:51.970 --> 00:08:56.249

Shirley Kuramoto: And, as I say, she loved the movies.

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00:08:56.630 --> 00:09:01.940

Shirley Kuramoto: She, did domestic work.

83

00:09:02.180 --> 00:09:05.540

Shirley Kuramoto: at the Stanford dormitory.

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00:09:06.730 --> 00:09:12.050

Shirley Kuramoto: And... And she had a son.

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00:09:13.070 --> 00:09:15.550

Shirley Kuramoto: My little baby brother.

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00:09:16.200 --> 00:09:21.819

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, I remember she also, worked...

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00:09:22.590 --> 00:09:33.089

Shirley Kuramoto: As a, I think a cook and a server for the Palo Alto Military School, I remember, because I helped my mother serve all the food.

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00:09:33.990 --> 00:09:41.240

Shirley Kuramoto: Then what, she did was,

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00:09:42.610 --> 00:09:47.939

Shirley Kuramoto: Finally, of course, we went to the camps.

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00:09:49.230 --> 00:09:55.059

Shirley Kuramoto: And after we came back, my father continued being a gardener.

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00:09:57.390 --> 00:10:01.429

Shirley Kuramoto: For, two wealthy families.

92

00:10:02.290 --> 00:10:06.160

Shirley Kuramoto: first course Stanford professor.

93

00:10:06.690 --> 00:10:13.629

Shirley Kuramoto: She was locked up in their house, and we stayed in this little cottage. My father, my baby brother, and myself.

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00:10:13.840 --> 00:10:21.210

Shirley Kuramoto: my father said, and I was fourteen at the time, my... Father said to me, Mama...

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00:10:21.580 --> 00:10:29.280

Shirley Kuramoto: has to cook for Mr. So-and-so, and the, a sick, wife.

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00:10:29.440 --> 00:10:30.220

Shirley Kuramoto: Yes.

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00:10:30.480 --> 00:10:33.259

Shirley Kuramoto: She was locked up in this house, big house.

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00:10:33.420 --> 00:10:35.190

Shirley Kuramoto: So my father said to me.

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00:10:35.390 --> 00:10:40.840

Shirley Kuramoto: you have to do the cooking now, because mama can't cook for the family anymore, and I was fourteen.

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00:10:41.210 --> 00:10:43.920

Shirley Kuramoto: So, somebody gave us a venison meat.

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00:10:44.100 --> 00:10:49.960

Shirley Kuramoto: Now, you know, I've never cooked before, so... I got this... big venison...

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00:10:50.220 --> 00:10:53.379

Shirley Kuramoto: meat, and I just stuck it in the oven.

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00:10:53.870 --> 00:10:56.650

Shirley Kuramoto: Without any kind of feasible.

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00:10:56.750 --> 00:11:07.039

Shirley Kuramoto: So, you could imagine how this venison tasted. But this father of mine was a very kind, quiet person.

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00:11:07.310 --> 00:11:12.899

Shirley Kuramoto: never complained about anything. I never saw my mother cry.

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00:11:13.680 --> 00:11:18.320

Shirley Kuramoto: I never, heard my father complain about anything.

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00:11:18.500 --> 00:11:25.360

Shirley Kuramoto: All I know is they worked hard during the day, came home, and then we ate dinner, and it was time to go to bed.

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00:11:26.360 --> 00:11:35.669

Shirley Kuramoto: And then... Let me talk about, the grandparents, my mother's parents.

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00:11:36.790 --> 00:11:39.750

Shirley Kuramoto: They had kind of an unusual background.

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00:11:39.900 --> 00:11:46.849

Shirley Kuramoto: My grandmother was not a picture-bride at all. Actually, they married Because they loved each other.

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00:11:47.380 --> 00:11:50.800

Shirley Kuramoto: And, they both came to California.

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00:11:51.140 --> 00:12:00.890

Shirley Kuramoto: He actually... the grandfather... I believe he worked in the railroads, too. I can't quite remember.

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00:12:01.430 --> 00:12:05.380

Shirley Kuramoto: But they ended up, as,

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00:12:05.740 --> 00:12:10.009

Shirley Kuramoto: ranch hands, or, you know, for the orchard.

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00:12:10.130 --> 00:12:13.549

Shirley Kuramoto: I forgot whether it was pear orchard or what kind of orchard.

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00:12:13.700 --> 00:12:16.499

Shirley Kuramoto: at the Susan Valley, actually.

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00:12:16.700 --> 00:12:18.970

Shirley Kuramoto: And, so my grandmother had

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00:12:19.420 --> 00:12:22.090

Shirley Kuramoto: raised me when I was an infant.

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00:12:22.330 --> 00:12:25.170

Shirley Kuramoto: Until my mother remarried, you know, I'm kind of going back.

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00:12:26.980 --> 00:12:35.280

Shirley Kuramoto: So, when I was about four, I was sent to a one-room school... schoolroom in Vacaville. I remember that.

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00:12:35.830 --> 00:12:38.930

Shirley Kuramoto: And, it was the first time, actually, that

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00:12:39.130 --> 00:12:47.690

Shirley Kuramoto: I was bullied. I didn't know what bullied meant at the time, but I was bullied because while I was waiting for my

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00:12:48.170 --> 00:12:50.260

Shirley Kuramoto: Uncle to pick me up.

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00:12:51.170 --> 00:12:56.330

Shirley Kuramoto: These boys, I remember, they got, please stop.

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00:12:56.490 --> 00:13:05.859

Shirley Kuramoto: laundry pins, and they put it all over my face. I remember that. But I was very stoic, never cried, never yelled, nothing.

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00:13:06.210 --> 00:13:13.330

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, when my uncle came to pick me up, they took... removed all these, laundry pins.

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00:13:13.590 --> 00:13:19.049

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, when I got in my uncle's car, I remember I started crying, and my...

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00:13:19.420 --> 00:13:22.250

Shirley Kuramoto: Uncle said, "what's the matter?"

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00:13:22.920 --> 00:13:25.650

Shirley Kuramoto: And... I won't tell him.

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00:13:26.170 --> 00:13:38.700

Shirley Kuramoto: I just kept everything. I just started crying, and then that was the last time, and then... but years later, when I was actually in the *sociology class!* years later.

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00:13:39.270 --> 00:13:41.100

Shirley Kuramoto: When I was an adult, you know?

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00:13:41.600 --> 00:13:57.799

Shirley Kuramoto: I remember the teacher gave us an assignment to think about something that happens when you're young. And all of a sudden, during this class time, I thought of that incident that I had forgotten about. And so, on my way home after class, I just started crying.

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00:13:57.950 --> 00:14:00.740

Shirley Kuramoto: I just started crying, and I got home.

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00:14:00.900 --> 00:14:03.969

Shirley Kuramoto: And my husband says, what happened?

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00:14:04.570 --> 00:14:05.910

Shirley Kuramoto: I couldn't tell them.

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00:14:06.420 --> 00:14:14.030

Shirley Kuramoto: And, you know, there's one of the things they say that's... Japanese have this...

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00:14:14.210 --> 00:14:23.600

Shirley Kuramoto: instilled, philosophy of being brave, and it's called *gamon*, G-A-M-O-N.

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00:14:24.130 --> 00:14:28.730

Shirley Kuramoto: I feel like, even though I wasn't taught about this term.

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00:14:29.470 --> 00:14:35.079

Shirley Kuramoto: I think, somehow, I had that *gamon*, because I never told

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00:14:35.540 --> 00:14:40.839

Shirley Kuramoto: My parents never told... my siblings, never told my friends.

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00:14:41.090 --> 00:14:44.790

Shirley Kuramoto: I never, never told anybody

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00:14:45.190 --> 00:14:54.080

Shirley Kuramoto: of some of the sufferings that I personally went through. I just kept it to myself. I never, never... and then I had this stoic face.

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00:14:54.830 --> 00:14:59.110

Shirley Kuramoto: So, whether I was sad, happy,

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00:14:59.390 --> 00:15:05.730

Shirley Kuramoto: mad. I had the same *stoic* face. It seems like I just kept myself

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00:15:05.850 --> 00:15:09.270

Shirley Kuramoto: I just learned to live that way.

146

00:15:13.540 --> 00:15:29.260

Taro Pali: And we're just gonna move on to the next question. What was it like growing up during the time and place of your early childhood, like, between ages, five to nine years old? 5 to 9.

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00:15:29.450 --> 00:15:37.630

Shirley Kuramoto: Five to nine? Yeah. Okay, that was when I went to the Menlo Park Elementary School, and I remember walking for, like, I would say three, four, five miles, you know, all by myself. I'd walk.

148

00:15:37.780 --> 00:15:38.990

Shirley Kuramoto: And,

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00:15:39.230 --> 00:15:51.049

Shirley Kuramoto: I knew that one day, one of my parents, a good friend, this gentleman, stopped the car because he recognized me. He said, I'll give you a ride home. And I said, no, no, I'm not gonna ride home. So...

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00:15:51.180 --> 00:16:00.459

Shirley Kuramoto: It was pretty good, because young as I was, I knew I didn't want to go in anybody's car. And I walked home.

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00:16:00.670 --> 00:16:08.899

Shirley Kuramoto: And, to where we lived in this little cottage. I was able to, play with,

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00:16:09.340 --> 00:16:11.850

Shirley Kuramoto: Two little girls that lived in the front.

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00:16:12.230 --> 00:16:19.240

Shirley Kuramoto: And, anyway, they had a horse, I remember.

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00:16:19.920 --> 00:16:30.590

Shirley Kuramoto: And, they let me ride on a horse with them, you know, so, although I was isolated from other children, I only had this, at home.

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00:16:30.690 --> 00:16:33.249

Shirley Kuramoto: This little white dog to play with.

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00:16:33.590 --> 00:16:38.630

Shirley Kuramoto: He was the only companion I had, was this little dog named *Shiro*.

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00:16:39.370 --> 00:16:43.340

Shirley Kuramoto: So that was about 6th, 7th, and

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00:16:43.440 --> 00:16:49.330

Shirley Kuramoto: although I was a quiet, young child.

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00:16:50.720 --> 00:16:56.969

Shirley Kuramoto: I must say, I, I think I was a little, I was

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00:16:57.230 --> 00:16:58.170

Shirley Kuramoto: you know....

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00:17:00.110 --> 00:17:11.150

Shirley Kuramoto: I wouldn't say the word "adventurous," but "new things" kind of happened to me that I wanted to try when this girl says, can you go borrow some cigarettes from your mother?

162

00:17:11.569 --> 00:17:20.919

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, I could borrow it. So, I said, all right, because I wanted to play with these girls. I don't want to lose them as, you know

163

00:17:21.250 --> 00:17:24.739

Shirley Kuramoto: a playmates once in a while, so I went home.

164

00:17:25.160 --> 00:17:28.780

Shirley Kuramoto: asked my mother, *Mr. So-and-so*, who lives in the front.

165

00:17:29.230 --> 00:17:33.810

Shirley Kuramoto: The owner of the big front house. He wants to borrow a cigarette.

166

00:17:34.000 --> 00:17:36.639

Shirley Kuramoto: So... can I bring it to him?

167

00:17:36.830 --> 00:17:49.899

Shirley Kuramoto: So, she never asked me any questions. I'm sure she thought it was kind of odd. Why would a wealthy man have to borrow a package of cigarettes? So she let me have the cigarettes, you know.

168

00:17:50.080 --> 00:17:53.020

Shirley Kuramoto: And so, I got the cigarette, the mattress.

169

00:17:53.730 --> 00:17:57.739

Shirley Kuramoto: I was so happy, and... and that I could...

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00:17:58.250 --> 00:18:03.029

Shirley Kuramoto: keep playing with these girls, and I brought this to the field.

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00:18:03.620 --> 00:18:12.260

Shirley Kuramoto: We were sitting where there were tall grasses all over the place. We sat down. The girls got their cigarette. Next, my turn.

172

00:18:12.640 --> 00:18:17.849

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, before I knew it, before I even got to light up the cigarette.

173

00:18:20.000 --> 00:18:28.400

Shirley Kuramoto: I heard a voice. Guess who that was? It was Mama. Mama says, are y'all having fun?

174

00:18:29.420 --> 00:18:34.790

Shirley Kuramoto: Because she knew there was something not right about it, right? So that was the first time that

175

00:18:34.890 --> 00:18:40.029

Shirley Kuramoto: I actually, had lied to Mama, my first experience.

176

00:18:40.150 --> 00:18:44.649

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, you know, I followed her home. But my mother, you know.

177

00:18:45.070 --> 00:18:48.619

Shirley Kuramoto: She never *raised her voice* to me.

178

00:18:49.830 --> 00:18:53.869

Shirley Kuramoto: When she was angry with me, *she was quiet*.

179

00:18:55.210 --> 00:19:04.330

Shirley Kuramoto: And... You know what they say, *silence is golden*, but when mama's silence, it's not golden at all!

180

00:19:04.820 --> 00:19:19.109

Shirley Kuramoto: Anything, else you'd like? Oh, so that's about what I remember, until... until nine, because nine was when, Pearl Harbor happened, and I... I was nine in the fourth grade.

181

00:19:21.590 --> 00:19:28.810

Shirley Kuramoto: So, surely, we'd like to learn more about what your experiences were like,

182

00:19:28.850 --> 00:19:36.669

Shirley Kuramoto: during the forced removal and mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. I think you were starting from nine and...

183

00:19:36.670 --> 00:19:54.370

Shirley Kuramoto: through twelve years old, before you became a teenager. Could you share with us any significant stories or any moments about what it was like during that time period in the camps?

184

00:19:54.500 --> 00:19:59.610

Shirley Kuramoto: Yeah, so right after, Pearl Harbor, I still went to school, yet, you know, around December, so it's still, what, January, February, I was still going to grammar school.

185

00:20:00.060 --> 00:20:04.460

Shirley Kuramoto: But after Pearl Harbor, you know,

186

00:20:05.160 --> 00:20:11.900

Shirley Kuramoto: on my... right before I went home, All of a sudden, this...

187

00:20:12.780 --> 00:20:22.249

Shirley Kuramoto: student, this boy, and it's funny, I still remember his name to this day. I've forgotten a lot of students' names, but I still remember his.

188

00:20:23.830 --> 00:20:26.070

Shirley Kuramoto: He starts calling me a "jap."

189

00:20:26.680 --> 00:20:29.889

Shirley Kuramoto: I never heard that word before in my life.

190

00:20:30.250 --> 00:20:31.540

Shirley Kuramoto: What's a *jap*?

191

00:20:32.560 --> 00:20:39.550

Shirley Kuramoto: But the way he kept saying that to me was very menacing. It was not friendly.

192

00:20:40.250 --> 00:20:45.699

Shirley Kuramoto: And he kept yelling at me, and I thought, what's this? I mean, I was so confused.

193

00:20:46.350 --> 00:20:52.480

Shirley Kuramoto: I went home, I never told anybody about this. Not ever.

194

00:20:53.160 --> 00:20:55.010

Shirley Kuramoto: I was still in my stoic.

195

00:20:55.370 --> 00:21:03.299

Shirley Kuramoto: self, kept everything that was... confusing or hurting. I kept it to myself.

196

00:21:03.930 --> 00:21:11.880

Shirley Kuramoto: So, when I went home, my mother says to me, out of the blue, "we're moving."

197

00:21:12.850 --> 00:21:14.689

Shirley Kuramoto: Just like that. "We're moving."

198

00:21:15.330 --> 00:21:16.860

Shirley Kuramoto: Or we have to move.

199

00:21:17.590 --> 00:21:19.840

Shirley Kuramoto: No explanation at all.

200

00:21:20.330 --> 00:21:22.559

Shirley Kuramoto: No explanation at all.

201

00:21:23.130 --> 00:21:27.070

Shirley Kuramoto: So I said, what's gonna happen to Shiro? My...

202

00:21:27.570 --> 00:21:32.140

Shirley Kuramoto: my, playmate, my doggie. What's gonna happen, Shiro?

203

00:21:33.160 --> 00:21:35.170

Shirley Kuramoto: That was the only concern I had.

204

00:21:35.750 --> 00:21:37.870

Shirley Kuramoto: Before I knew it.

205

00:21:39.090 --> 00:21:46.549

Shirley Kuramoto: we ended up... of course, we live in Menlo Parks, that meant... that's, actually San Mateo County.

206

00:21:46.760 --> 00:21:51.470

Shirley Kuramoto: So, we were, with the people from San Francisco area.

207

00:21:52.420 --> 00:21:55.630

Shirley Kuramoto: We were all sent to the,

208

00:21:56.300 --> 00:22:02.419

Shirley Kuramoto: [Tanforan Racetrack](#). They had a regular horse racetrack at that time.

209

00:22:02.980 --> 00:22:10.910

Shirley Kuramoto: And our family, you know, again, my parents, my baby brother, he was still in diapers, and myself.

210

00:22:11.930 --> 00:22:17.419

Shirley Kuramoto: We were assigned to live in this horse stall, Tanforan horsestall.

211

00:22:17.960 --> 00:22:18.850

Shirley Kuramoto: Now...

212

00:22:19.480 --> 00:22:27.040

Shirley Kuramoto: At that time, you know, they tried to, clean out the horse dog, and they tried to put the linoleum on the floor.

213

00:22:27.190 --> 00:22:31.770

Shirley Kuramoto: So it won't smell too much. But yet, it stunk.

214

00:22:31.940 --> 00:22:35.069

Shirley Kuramoto: It smells so much that it would get on your clothes.

215

00:22:35.820 --> 00:22:41.139

Shirley Kuramoto: There was a little opening on top of the horse stall, was open.

216

00:22:41.370 --> 00:22:43.510

Shirley Kuramoto: And, still...

217

00:22:44.110 --> 00:22:50.299

Shirley Kuramoto: the smell stayed in. I can't remember the smell. I know there are two rooms, only two rooms.

218

00:22:51.940 --> 00:22:58.120

Shirley Kuramoto: And... All I know is that we were given

219

00:22:59.680 --> 00:23:05.950

Shirley Kuramoto: These, mattress covers, and, we had to cover it with, straw.

220

00:23:06.380 --> 00:23:07.970

Shirley Kuramoto: That was our mattress.

221

00:23:08.090 --> 00:23:13.410

Shirley Kuramoto: I can't remember anything else about that. We had our suitcases.

222

00:23:14.890 --> 00:23:19.689

Shirley Kuramoto: The only thing that I heard my mother complain about, and this is the only complaint.

223

00:23:20.090 --> 00:23:23.869

Shirley Kuramoto: Was that because my baby brother still

224

00:23:24.260 --> 00:23:27.629

Shirley Kuramoto: I needed diapers, the cloth diapers at that time.

225

00:23:27.800 --> 00:23:35.050

Shirley Kuramoto: And his, baby bottles, and some heavy pan to heat up the baby bottle.

226

00:23:35.470 --> 00:23:40.469

Shirley Kuramoto: took a lot of space of the suitcase. That's the only thing she had mentioned to me.

227

00:23:40.880 --> 00:23:43.610

Shirley Kuramoto: I have really long pigtails.

228

00:23:44.610 --> 00:23:57.619

Shirley Kuramoto: as soon as we moved there, I think it was too much for my mother to take care of my little brother with a situation. It was too much for her to take time to braid my hair. She took me to the barber.

229

00:23:58.060 --> 00:24:05.029

Shirley Kuramoto: And, soon after we moved there, she took me to the barber, and the barber just sniffed up my long...

230

00:24:05.260 --> 00:24:06.420

Shirley Kuramoto: pigtails.

231

00:24:06.920 --> 00:24:11.140

Shirley Kuramoto: And I looked... I never looked,

232

00:24:11.480 --> 00:24:17.530

Shirley Kuramoto: I almost looked like a boy at that time, you know, that time was a little different in my time.

233

00:24:17.980 --> 00:24:21.310

Shirley Kuramoto: I was so upset. I was really traumatized.

234

00:24:21.860 --> 00:24:25.130

Shirley Kuramoto: that... I didn't cry.

235

00:24:25.390 --> 00:24:26.980

Shirley Kuramoto: But I was traumatized.

236

00:24:27.160 --> 00:24:30.469

Shirley Kuramoto: I had to cover my head with a scarf.

237

00:24:31.650 --> 00:24:33.170

Shirley Kuramoto: For a long time.

238

00:24:33.380 --> 00:24:36.139

Shirley Kuramoto: And that was the days when,

239

00:24:36.380 --> 00:24:45.530

Shirley Kuramoto: We were waiting for our regular barrier to be built yet, you know, so we had to stay there for a few months, and then they had, entertainment at the,

240

00:24:45.900 --> 00:24:47.839

Shirley Kuramoto: Tanforan

241

00:24:47.940 --> 00:24:49.910

Shirley Kuramoto: The main area.

242

00:24:50.200 --> 00:24:58.119

Shirley Kuramoto: So we... I don't remember seeing movies, but they had entertainment, like, challenge shows over there. I do remember that.

243

00:24:58.240 --> 00:25:02.380

Shirley Kuramoto: I made some friends. It was the first time I was with,

244

00:25:02.690 --> 00:25:14.179

Shirley Kuramoto: Of course, where we were suddenly with other Japanese families all of a sudden, and I have playmates who are all Japanese Americans, you know.

245

00:25:14.530 --> 00:25:16.440

Shirley Kuramoto: So that was the first time.

246

00:25:17.910 --> 00:25:23.010

Shirley Kuramoto: that I was with Japanese... a lot of Japanese people.

247

00:25:23.420 --> 00:25:32.430

Shirley Kuramoto: And that was the start of the lack of privacy, being in lines, you know. And the only thing I remember about our breakfast.

248

00:25:33.000 --> 00:25:45.199

Shirley Kuramoto: that I still eat today, is that we, ate, Kellogg's cereal, dry cereal, in the individual boxes, and I remember eating from the box.

249

00:25:45.760 --> 00:25:48.260

Shirley Kuramoto: So, that was the beginning.

250

00:25:48.530 --> 00:25:57.360

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, my father, on his day off, he would, he built a nice little

251

00:25:57.710 --> 00:26:11.600

Shirley Kuramoto: sailboat, because the men, you know, they didn't have a lake there at the time. The Japanese men got together and built a small lake at the time, that's what I found out. So, my father got this, made this little boat.

252

00:26:11.880 --> 00:26:14.170

Shirley Kuramoto: For my little baby brother, you know.

253

00:26:14.460 --> 00:26:16.660

Shirley Kuramoto: But, so that's what I remember.

254

00:26:16.860 --> 00:26:18.850

Shirley Kuramoto: Next,

255

00:26:19.740 --> 00:26:25.710

Shirley Kuramoto: Which, after that, you went to one of the camps. Yes, then, then we were, sent...

256

00:26:25.930 --> 00:26:30.399

Shirley Kuramoto: to, Utah at the, Topaz relocation center.

257

00:26:30.840 --> 00:26:33.729

Shirley Kuramoto: a relocation center in Utah.

258

00:26:34.200 --> 00:26:39.350

Shirley Kuramoto: And there, we were, lived in a one-room barrack.

259

00:26:39.990 --> 00:26:47.279

Shirley Kuramoto: And luckily, my father was assigned to the carpentry division.

260

00:26:48.020 --> 00:26:54.090

Shirley Kuramoto: I think... I'm not sure, I think he got \$26 a month, I think.

261

00:26:54.500 --> 00:27:04.719

Shirley Kuramoto: So, he had some tools to, manage making our furniture from scrap, lumber, you know, and that gave us, nice,

262

00:27:05.680 --> 00:27:10.999

Shirley Kuramoto: wooden, what do you call it? Nice little,

263

00:27:11.250 --> 00:27:15.420

Shirley Kuramoto: basis to have our own privacy between the beds, you know.

264

00:27:16.120 --> 00:27:26.080

Shirley Kuramoto: So... And, of course, we had that one light bulb in the ceiling, and the pot deli stove.

265

00:27:26.520 --> 00:27:29.040

Shirley Kuramoto: At that time, too.

266

00:27:30.130 --> 00:27:34.880

Shirley Kuramoto: And my father started his hobby at the time.

267

00:27:35.240 --> 00:27:44.939

Shirley Kuramoto: And my mother, too. They, started singing these Songs, they're like, place from the NOAA place.

268

00:27:45.110 --> 00:27:48.220

Shirley Kuramoto: Which originated, really, from China.

269

00:27:48.350 --> 00:27:56.310

Shirley Kuramoto: So my father, at nighttime, when he came home, and it was pretty dark when you got only one light bulb, you know, in your ceiling.

270

00:27:57.190 --> 00:27:58.630

Shirley Kuramoto: He managed.

271

00:27:58.860 --> 00:27:59.720

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh.

272

00:28:00.680 --> 00:28:07.029

Shirley Kuramoto: To start writing, handwriting, these, place, or...

273

00:28:07.520 --> 00:28:11.140

Shirley Kuramoto: These books that he was singing about stories about

274

00:28:11.340 --> 00:28:23.450

Shirley Kuramoto: this place, but in a sing-song way. When I say sing-song, these songs... Sounded like they're... Chantings.

275

00:28:24.710 --> 00:28:26.390

Shirley Kuramoto: That's what they sounded like.

276

00:28:27.590 --> 00:28:35.340

Shirley Kuramoto: So we were there, and I do remember that, I got up one day.

277

00:28:36.620 --> 00:28:39.809

Shirley Kuramoto: In the morning, and my mother said, hurry up, it's time to go to school.

278

00:28:40.180 --> 00:28:42.620

Shirley Kuramoto: And I couldn't move, I just stood there.

279

00:28:43.190 --> 00:28:54.350

Shirley Kuramoto: And she turned around, you know, doing something, turned back, and I'm still standing there, and she goes, hurry up, hurry up, it's time to stand up! I mean, to go to school, hurry up and get dressed.

280

00:28:54.900 --> 00:28:57.529

Shirley Kuramoto: So... I couldn't move at all.

281

00:28:58.970 --> 00:29:03.440

Shirley Kuramoto: So, she ended up taking me to the hospital.

282

00:29:04.590 --> 00:29:09.239

Shirley Kuramoto: And I found out that I had uh heat stroke.

283

00:29:09.730 --> 00:29:15.410

Shirley Kuramoto: I had 106 degrees, is what my understanding is. They put me in an ice tub.

284

00:29:15.650 --> 00:29:17.170

Shirley Kuramoto: ice,

285

00:29:18.070 --> 00:29:25.150

Shirley Kuramoto: tub, yeah, ice tub with a lot of ice in it. And I still remember, I was in the hospital for eleven days.

286

00:29:25.310 --> 00:29:26.990

Shirley Kuramoto: Where does he stroke.

287

00:29:28.150 --> 00:29:31.040

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I came home.

288

00:29:32.220 --> 00:29:34.220

Shirley Kuramoto: That's what I remember.

289

00:29:34.390 --> 00:29:37.929

Shirley Kuramoto: And I think, also, my mother,

290

00:29:38.100 --> 00:29:42.280

Shirley Kuramoto: Wanted to take, for me to take piano lessons.

291

00:29:43.310 --> 00:29:52.800

Shirley Kuramoto: So... I would go to... practice in this [one barrack room](#). They had this piano set up.

292

00:29:53.470 --> 00:29:57.290

Shirley Kuramoto: And do you think I was a good little girl

293

00:29:57.620 --> 00:30:00.199

Shirley Kuramoto: practicing my piano lessons?

294

00:30:00.310 --> 00:30:01.360

Shirley Kuramoto: No.

295

00:30:03.100 --> 00:30:07.560

Shirley Kuramoto: I... I guess I didn't like my lessons or something.

296

00:30:08.140 --> 00:30:10.190

Shirley Kuramoto: But I knew how to play chopsticks.

297

00:30:10.650 --> 00:30:18.060

Shirley Kuramoto: I would play chopsticks each time, and then I would go back... back home. So I... you know, that's one of the regrets I have today.

298

00:30:18.240 --> 00:30:25.980

Shirley Kuramoto: That I, I wasn't, dutiful, dutiful, Nice little daughter.

299

00:30:27.090 --> 00:30:32.940

Shirley Kuramoto: So, but while we were there, we... I... I think, oh yes, and I couldn't...

300

00:30:34.990 --> 00:30:52.070

Shirley Kuramoto: join any... they had, Girl Scouts, too, at that time. Any organizations. We did go to church. There were two branches of Buddhist church, but we were not active in there, but I always had to be with my parents.

301

00:30:52.520 --> 00:30:57.249

Shirley Kuramoto: I couldn't be in any other organizations. So then eventually.

302

00:30:58.310 --> 00:31:03.760

Shirley Kuramoto: We're getting back to this [loyalty questions 27, 28](#).

303

00:31:04.950 --> 00:31:05.770

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh.

304

00:31:07.290 --> 00:31:12.100

Shirley Kuramoto: Where the government is looking for all yes answers.

305

00:31:13.180 --> 00:31:15.640

Shirley Kuramoto: Only, yes, nothing else.

306

00:31:16.130 --> 00:31:19.930

Shirley Kuramoto: My mother put down two yeses for both questions.

307

00:31:20.390 --> 00:31:23.370

Shirley Kuramoto: Which made our family in danger already.

308

00:31:23.760 --> 00:31:30.730

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh, surely, what is... what would the yes was? Yeah, the first one is that if you were asked to.

309

00:31:30.990 --> 00:31:37.789

Shirley Kuramoto: Would you, go in the military for the U.S.

310

00:31:38.200 --> 00:31:39.490

Shirley Kuramoto: against Japan.

311

00:31:39.730 --> 00:31:46.240

Shirley Kuramoto: So... My mother's question was, would you go in the WAC, the women's core?

312

00:31:46.740 --> 00:31:52.729

Shirley Kuramoto: My mother put no, because she had young children, so she's not gonna go off to fight in the

313

00:31:52.850 --> 00:32:02.230

Shirley Kuramoto: Women's Military Corps, or the WAC. The second question is, will you be 100% loyal

314

00:32:02.530 --> 00:32:11.090

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm abbreviating this question. Will you be 100% loyal to the U.S?

315

00:32:11.840 --> 00:32:14.849

Shirley Kuramoto: And, you know, had nothing to do with, Japan.

316

00:32:17.130 --> 00:32:26.820

Shirley Kuramoto: Where does your loyalty lie 100%? So... My mother had a strange... answer about

317

00:32:27.230 --> 00:32:34.290

Shirley Kuramoto: because she's married to a man who was born in Japan, she had relatives in Japan.

318

00:32:34.420 --> 00:32:43.270

Shirley Kuramoto: She didn't really understand the question, so she put no. So our family had two no's, which is... we're already in danger already.

319

00:32:44.030 --> 00:32:52.079

Shirley Kuramoto: My father, on the other hand, Question twenty-seven gone.

320

00:32:54.150 --> 00:33:01.590

Shirley Kuramoto: he had the same question that my mother had. Will you join the Women's court? And that was my father.

321

00:33:01.820 --> 00:33:05.680

Shirley Kuramoto: That was, kind of a weird question to ask a man.

322

00:33:06.880 --> 00:33:11.470

Shirley Kuramoto: So, what he did was, because it was unusual.

323

00:33:11.690 --> 00:33:13.839

Shirley Kuramoto: What he did was he put a dash

324

00:33:13.990 --> 00:33:17.350

Shirley Kuramoto: To indicate that he had read this question.

325

00:33:17.890 --> 00:33:21.599

Shirley Kuramoto: And I think that's pretty understandable, you know.

326

00:33:22.020 --> 00:33:26.470

Shirley Kuramoto: He read it. You know, he can't answer it, he's not gonna go in the "WAC."

327

00:33:27.820 --> 00:33:31.610

Shirley Kuramoto: The second question, will you be 100% loyal?

328

00:33:33.350 --> 00:33:36.230

Shirley Kuramoto: My father, who was born in Japan, he put yes.

329

00:33:36.450 --> 00:33:39.439

Shirley Kuramoto: I will be loyal. He will be loyal.

330

00:33:40.830 --> 00:33:42.649

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, it's too late.

331

00:33:44.850 --> 00:33:49.769

Shirley Kuramoto: Our family already has Two *nos*, one dash.

332

00:33:50.500 --> 00:33:58.830

Shirley Kuramoto: And only one yes, and we are deemed as unloyal U.S. citizens. So, okay.

333

00:33:58.930 --> 00:34:03.269

Shirley Kuramoto: We must be sent to the *Tule Lakes Segregation Center*.

334

00:34:03.430 --> 00:34:06.019

Shirley Kuramoto: Where a lot of people there are...

335

00:34:06.160 --> 00:34:09.150

Shirley Kuramoto: waiting to be shipped back to Japan.

336

00:34:09.320 --> 00:34:17.229

Shirley Kuramoto: and their loyalty lies in their belief that Japan's gonna win the war, so they want to go back to Japan.

337

00:34:18.210 --> 00:34:20.300

Shirley Kuramoto: So, we were sent to...

338

00:34:20.489 --> 00:34:28.469

Shirley Kuramoto: to a lake, and on this train, you know, you have to keep the shades down. There's a... in each car, you have to... there's a...

339

00:34:28.810 --> 00:34:33.790

Shirley Kuramoto: military persons sitting in the front and in the back.

340

00:34:33.949 --> 00:34:41.669

Shirley Kuramoto: So we're being watched all the time, and then the only time that we're able to get out of the

341

00:34:42.449 --> 00:34:43.590

Shirley Kuramoto: cars

342

00:34:43.710 --> 00:34:46.590

Shirley Kuramoto: on the train, in the middle of nowhere.

343

00:34:47.190 --> 00:34:53.439

Shirley Kuramoto: Is so that the trains could dump... the waste.

344

00:34:53.630 --> 00:35:00.550

Shirley Kuramoto: That's the main reason we were able to go out in the fields and then go back in the cars again.

345

00:35:00.680 --> 00:35:07.729

Shirley Kuramoto: So, then we arrived to... to Tule Lake. By that time, I was already...

346

00:35:07.980 --> 00:35:12.560

Shirley Kuramoto: I would say about ten and a half, almost eleven, by then, you know.

347

00:35:13.440 --> 00:35:14.660

Shirley Kuramoto: a little older.

348

00:35:15.180 --> 00:35:26.400

Shirley Kuramoto: So... I do remember, I went to a Japanese.

349

00:35:26.600 --> 00:35:29.869

Shirley Kuramoto: Japanese school that was run by these

350

00:35:30.160 --> 00:35:38.959

Shirley Kuramoto: pro-Japan, they were like activists, and they were allowed at that time that we were there, they were allowed to,

351

00:35:39.460 --> 00:35:44.469

Shirley Kuramoto: Practice their activities at that time.

352

00:35:44.580 --> 00:35:47.789

Shirley Kuramoto: So, this Japanese school was run by them.

353

00:35:48.700 --> 00:35:49.980

Shirley Kuramoto: pro-Japan.

354

00:35:50.900 --> 00:35:57.930

Shirley Kuramoto: a soap. I would have to get up early in the morning, pick up all the trash in our block. That was my duty.

355

00:35:58.220 --> 00:36:01.989

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, with a stick, with the nails protruding at the end.

356

00:36:02.090 --> 00:36:10.099

Shirley Kuramoto: pick up all of this trash in my... my block, and then after that, I would, go

357

00:36:10.310 --> 00:36:17.019

Shirley Kuramoto: With my classmates, to be with this pro-activist and they wore these...

358

00:36:17.190 --> 00:36:23.120

Shirley Kuramoto: White bands around their head, white bands around their shoulder.

359

00:36:23.430 --> 00:36:30.800

Shirley Kuramoto: And I was dressed that way, too. And we had to hear all this propaganda that

360

00:36:31.750 --> 00:36:36.870

Shirley Kuramoto: "Japan's gonna win the war," and we had to exercise with them

361

00:36:37.480 --> 00:36:40.480

Shirley Kuramoto: And we had to bow together with them.

362

00:36:41.230 --> 00:36:49.789

Shirley Kuramoto: and show our loyalty. Of course, when we bow down, we're bowing down to, actually, the Emperor. You know, that's... that's a symbol.

363

00:36:50.410 --> 00:36:51.530

Shirley Kuramoto: bowed down.

364

00:36:52.170 --> 00:36:55.960

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, after that.

365

00:36:56.230 --> 00:37:01.059

Shirley Kuramoto: Of course, I really didn't know what they were talking about, you know, but I listened.

366

00:37:01.530 --> 00:37:04.019

Shirley Kuramoto: As a "good little girl, good little student."

367

00:37:04.730 --> 00:37:07.179

Shirley Kuramoto: Then, the fun part came for me.

368

00:37:08.450 --> 00:37:15.249

Shirley Kuramoto: I... We students have to march in and out of the, barracks, but,

369

00:37:16.080 --> 00:37:26.080

Shirley Kuramoto: I got to lead little children behind me. *I got to be the leader*, and that was the fun part, you know? We would, march with goose steps.

370

00:37:26.710 --> 00:37:34.260

Shirley Kuramoto: And march around all over the place, and yeah, I just loved it. And then, we reported to our schoolroom.

371

00:37:35.650 --> 00:37:38.670

Shirley Kuramoto: Once inside the schoolroom, you know, you have to bow down

372

00:37:38.780 --> 00:37:41.380

Shirley Kuramoto: Also, you have to stand,

373

00:37:41.570 --> 00:37:48.079

Shirley Kuramoto: straight in front of your desk, and when the teacher comes to the front, he's got this long stick, you know.

374

00:37:48.520 --> 00:37:50.559

Shirley Kuramoto: We bow down to him.

375

00:37:51.530 --> 00:37:52.330

Shirley Kuramoto: And...

376

00:37:52.470 --> 00:38:00.979

Shirley Kuramoto: We did a lot of things individually, like, we had to sing... after we learned these military Japanese songs.

377

00:38:01.420 --> 00:38:05.839

Shirley Kuramoto: which pertain to winning the war. They're really racist.

378

00:38:06.220 --> 00:38:17.089

Shirley Kuramoto: songs that I didn't know what I was singing about, but I love to sing them, because there were a lot of bouncy tunes to this, you know? I love to sing, but I didn't know what I was singing about.

379

00:38:18.250 --> 00:38:25.329

Shirley Kuramoto: And... We had to sit with a good posture, All the time.

380

00:38:25.990 --> 00:38:32.009

Shirley Kuramoto: And we would have to sing individually these new songs we have to learn.

381

00:38:32.660 --> 00:38:38.280

Shirley Kuramoto: I remember one time this little cat came in. It was ready to have little kittens.

382

00:38:39.170 --> 00:38:40.200

Shirley Kuramoto: I think...

383

00:38:40.640 --> 00:38:53.140

Shirley Kuramoto: one was starting to come out or something, and we all started screaming in our classroom. I remember that. I should laugh now, but I remember that. We're all screaming in our...

384

00:38:54.320 --> 00:38:56.670

Shirley Kuramoto: Leticia got so angry.

385

00:38:56.890 --> 00:39:03.820

Shirley Kuramoto: But anyway, so one day, the teacher announced that he's going to have a parent-teacher conference.

386

00:39:05.140 --> 00:39:15.200

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I knew when he was gonna come, and our barrack, window was wide open.

387

00:39:15.490 --> 00:39:21.250

Shirley Kuramoto: So I sat underneath this wide-open window to hear what they were gonna talk about.

388

00:39:22.000 --> 00:39:28.850

Shirley Kuramoto: So the first thing my father says to the teacher is.

389

00:39:29.990 --> 00:39:33.830

Shirley Kuramoto: "How is my daughter coming along in school?"

390

00:39:35.250 --> 00:39:40.609

Shirley Kuramoto: And my father, You know, he was very quiet, but...

391

00:39:41.700 --> 00:39:48.909

Shirley Kuramoto: My parents were anxiously waiting for a good... Answer from this teacher.

392

00:39:50.410 --> 00:39:55.860

Shirley Kuramoto: So, start again. Always our daughter coming along in school.

393

00:39:56.790 --> 00:40:03.320

Shirley Kuramoto: The first things that I hear the teachers say is, "When your daughter grows up.

394

00:40:03.570 --> 00:40:06.710

Shirley Kuramoto: She's gonna be a really good clown.”

395

00:40:07.130 --> 00:40:15.449

Shirley Kuramoto: Now, do you think that's what my parents wanted to hear? That my father wanted to hear? No, it was such an embarrassment.

396

00:40:16.940 --> 00:40:28.160

Shirley Kuramoto: he wanted to hear my daughter, you know, “studious, good grades, blah blah blah.” Here, I'd be a good clown. And I never thought of myself as being a good clown.

397

00:40:29.400 --> 00:40:32.430

Shirley Kuramoto: So... After that moment.

398

00:40:33.750 --> 00:40:43.220

Shirley Kuramoto: every night, I had to, not every night, yeah, well, after my parents, my father came home from work.

399

00:40:43.730 --> 00:40:49.299

Shirley Kuramoto: I had to stand in front of this, board, I suppose.

400

00:40:49.490 --> 00:40:54.119

Shirley Kuramoto: or scrap paper of some kind, and I had to,

401

00:40:54.510 --> 00:40:56.689

Shirley Kuramoto: I go through all these,

402

00:40:57.300 --> 00:41:06.060

Shirley Kuramoto: Japanese writing. Calligraphy, they're actually Chinese calligraphy, but they're in Japanese. I had to do that

403

00:41:06.440 --> 00:41:12.529

Shirley Kuramoto: And my father was very strict with me. I couldn't go out and play with my...

404

00:41:12.730 --> 00:41:18.579

Shirley Kuramoto: little friends anymore, because I pulled a couple stunts, you see, already, right before then.

405

00:41:18.760 --> 00:41:20.560

Shirley Kuramoto: where I would ask Mama.

406

00:41:20.770 --> 00:41:27.359

Shirley Kuramoto: After dinner, it was still early. I said, Mama, is it alright if I go and play with my friends?

407

00:41:27.620 --> 00:41:31.680

Shirley Kuramoto: And she said, well, alright, it's still early, you can go play with your friends.

408

00:41:32.240 --> 00:41:38.760

Shirley Kuramoto: So... I knew, you see, they...

409

00:41:38.890 --> 00:41:46.190

Shirley Kuramoto: at the Tule Lake camp, they showed all the latest Hollywood movies, the newest ones, and they were shown at the mess hall.

410

00:41:46.990 --> 00:41:50.230

Shirley Kuramoto: And I knew there was going to be a movie shown that night.

411

00:41:50.340 --> 00:41:53.580

Shirley Kuramoto: And here, my mother said, yes, you could go play with your friends.

412

00:41:54.020 --> 00:41:57.850

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I was so happy and excited, I...

413

00:41:58.000 --> 00:42:00.329

Shirley Kuramoto: Went to the mess hall by myself.

414

00:42:00.620 --> 00:42:04.189

Shirley Kuramoto: Sat down on the floor with everybody else.

415

00:42:04.690 --> 00:42:06.909

Shirley Kuramoto: So excited to see this movie.

416

00:42:07.560 --> 00:42:10.720

Shirley Kuramoto: Before the movie started, guess what?

417

00:42:12.540 --> 00:42:13.420

Shirley Kuramoto: I...

418

00:42:13.620 --> 00:42:22.669

Shirley Kuramoto: Get a tap, tap, tap on my shoulder. I look up, and it's Mama! She didn't say a word. Not a word.

419

00:42:23.110 --> 00:42:24.230

Shirley Kuramoto: She caught me.

420

00:42:24.830 --> 00:42:25.959

Shirley Kuramoto: Not a word.

421

00:42:26.110 --> 00:42:27.930

Shirley Kuramoto: I followed her home.

422

00:42:28.580 --> 00:42:33.529

Shirley Kuramoto: She didn't say a thing. And I'll tell you just one last thing.

423

00:42:35.880 --> 00:42:41.869

Shirley Kuramoto: My girlfriend, Betty, I still remember her name, she was allowed to have coffee every morning.

424

00:42:42.020 --> 00:42:49.759

Shirley Kuramoto: I was not allowed to have coffee. She was my same age, you know, here we... here we are, here we are, 10, 10 and a half.

425

00:42:50.520 --> 00:42:58.129

Shirley Kuramoto: I said to Mama, is it okay if I have breakfast with Betty's family in the morning?

426

00:42:58.770 --> 00:43:06.620

Shirley Kuramoto: And, so my mother thought about it and said: "alright, just this time, you could go have breakfast with your friends, family."

427

00:43:07.550 --> 00:43:10.680

Shirley Kuramoto: So I'm excited. I got in line.

428

00:43:11.340 --> 00:43:17.519

Shirley Kuramoto: at the cafeteria, you know, we have to be lined up there, too. We had to be in line wherever we went.

429

00:43:18.630 --> 00:43:21.069

Shirley Kuramoto: Not online. Got my tray.

430

00:43:21.570 --> 00:43:28.879

Shirley Kuramoto: And I got my cup of coffee. I put sugar and cream in this, because I know that's what adults do.

431

00:43:29.010 --> 00:43:38.880

Shirley Kuramoto: Followed my girlfriend, sat next to her, and I put my coffee down there, and you know, mess hall, you could see everybody. Everybody eats together at the same time.

432

00:43:39.370 --> 00:43:45.359

Shirley Kuramoto: After we hear the clang, clang, clang of the bell, that it's time for you to come to the cafeteria, of course.

433

00:43:45.900 --> 00:43:50.530

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm sitting next to Betty. I'm so excited.

434

00:43:50.660 --> 00:43:55.689

Shirley Kuramoto: before I could... Get my hands on my...

435

00:43:56.320 --> 00:43:59.380

Shirley Kuramoto: treasure. Like, it's a cup of coffee!

436

00:44:00.270 --> 00:44:04.250

Shirley Kuramoto: I see a hand taking away

437

00:44:04.360 --> 00:44:09.979

Shirley Kuramoto: my cup of coffee, and it's... look up, it's Mama!

438

00:44:10.160 --> 00:44:12.889

Shirley Kuramoto: *She took away my cup of coffee.*

439

00:44:14.690 --> 00:44:18.370

Shirley Kuramoto: But she allowed me to stay and finish.

440

00:44:18.580 --> 00:44:26.850

Shirley Kuramoto: my, breakfast. So... I always used to think, after that.

441

00:44:27.710 --> 00:44:34.040

Shirley Kuramoto: Why is it that Mama is like a spy? She's always spying on me, but afterwards.

442

00:44:34.170 --> 00:44:38.760

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, after I grew up, and I was thinking about all these silly things that I did.

443

00:44:40.110 --> 00:44:44.220

Shirley Kuramoto: I realized that Mama was really...

444

00:44:44.950 --> 00:44:47.459

Shirley Kuramoto: trying to take good care of me.

445

00:44:48.130 --> 00:44:53.670

Shirley Kuramoto: She was watching out for me. So, of course, even if I had breakfast with my

446

00:44:53.960 --> 00:45:00.379

Shirley Kuramoto: girlfriend, of course she'd look over there to make sure I was sitting with my girlfriend, and there she sees that cup of coffee.

447

00:45:00.540 --> 00:45:11.449

Shirley Kuramoto: Because when we had milk, which I was supposed to get, we had that... a regular little carton of milk. You could tell that's milk, not an extra cup.

448

00:45:11.890 --> 00:45:20.760

Shirley Kuramoto: So that's all I can tell you about my experiences in camp until we were ready to come out.

449

00:45:22.530 --> 00:45:34.140

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh, I forgot to tell you on the story. So that was... I went to Japan School in the morning, but I had a special permission to go to American school the same day in the afternoon.

450

00:45:34.290 --> 00:45:37.130

Shirley Kuramoto: So then I, in the afternoon, I go to American school.

451

00:45:37.290 --> 00:45:43.209

Shirley Kuramoto: Then I placed my allegations to the United States. I sing patriotic United States

452

00:45:43.410 --> 00:45:56.059

Shirley Kuramoto: songs like "God Bless America." My teacher did not have long sticks, you know, it was more comfortable to be in an American school. So, I did this every day.

453

00:45:58.260 --> 00:46:00.920

Shirley Kuramoto: Two different kinds of loyalties.

454

00:46:01.030 --> 00:46:09.510

Shirley Kuramoto: I never thought of it. It was just routine for me. Never thought of it, until I was much older, and I was thinking back, and I thought, wow.

455

00:46:09.620 --> 00:46:16.719

Shirley Kuramoto: It's a wonder that I went to two different kinds of schools, you know? I never really stopped to think about it. It was just all routine.

456

00:46:20.390 --> 00:46:29.140

Daniel Baron: Shirley, did you have a firm community you felt well-connected to, and can you please tell me, what were the places that you felt a strong sense of belonging?

457

00:46:29.400 --> 00:46:31.250

Shirley Kuramoto: Okay, besides.

458

00:46:31.600 --> 00:46:44.099

Shirley Kuramoto: The sense of community or belonging was in the camp, because we... I was with Japanese people. We had something in common. The kids and me, my parents, we all had something in common, so...

459

00:46:44.230 --> 00:46:52.919

Shirley Kuramoto: I would say that was the first introduction of a community when we came out.

460

00:46:53.860 --> 00:46:54.970

Shirley Kuramoto: My parents.

461

00:46:55.210 --> 00:46:59.710

Shirley Kuramoto: My parents, We're very hard workers.

462

00:47:00.120 --> 00:47:03.740

Shirley Kuramoto: We, did go to church

463

00:47:04.010 --> 00:47:20.420

Shirley Kuramoto: once in a while, because their friends were in church, and this was a Buddhist church, but they're... they believed in two different types of Buddhist church, but they're Buddhists, but they were not active in it, but they had friends in it. So, it was off.

464

00:47:20.810 --> 00:47:31.140

Shirley Kuramoto: whim... they got together with their friends off times, not during church, so I was never active in

465

00:47:31.410 --> 00:47:39.520

Shirley Kuramoto: Any kind of, organization within a church, so I never experienced

466

00:47:41.740 --> 00:47:49.549

Shirley Kuramoto: that feeling of being in a community, because I think because I was isolated still in the country.

467

00:47:50.320 --> 00:47:52.530

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I didn't have that feeling.

468

00:47:53.620 --> 00:47:57.050

Shirley Kuramoto: Say, community at that time.

469

00:48:01.040 --> 00:48:03.310

Taro Pali: And then I wanted to ask.

470

00:48:03.430 --> 00:48:21.419

Taro Pali: Do you think your Japanese-American experience, how do you think it might have differed from the Japanese experience in Japan? Like, maybe, like, your family members in Japan? Do you think it had... you had a significant difference?

471

00:48:21.530 --> 00:48:32.899

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh, definitely. Yes, yes. Because of our lifestyle here, American lifestyle, becoming more Americanized, and I want to tell you that, later, before I was retired, I'll...

472

00:48:33.590 --> 00:48:39.439

Shirley Kuramoto: kind of go back to more recent years. I worked for a Japanese company.

473

00:48:41.300 --> 00:48:44.600

Shirley Kuramoto: So, all the employees were

474

00:48:45.060 --> 00:48:53.790

Shirley Kuramoto: from Japan, spoke Japanese, my... our boss, was the...

475

00:48:54.780 --> 00:48:56.810

Shirley Kuramoto: I don't know how to put it.

476

00:48:56.970 --> 00:49:02.870

Shirley Kuramoto: the... should I say the old-style Japanese boss?

477

00:49:03.010 --> 00:49:05.219

Shirley Kuramoto: Traditional? Traditional.

478

00:49:05.410 --> 00:49:06.350

Shirley Kuramoto: you know.

479

00:49:06.780 --> 00:49:17.169

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I was his executive. Well, I had different kind of titles in this job, but mainly I was the secretary. But I was the only U.S.-born

480

00:49:17.890 --> 00:49:23.770

Shirley Kuramoto: Japanese. So... It was like I... I was an outsider.

481

00:49:23.900 --> 00:49:28.600

Shirley Kuramoto: Because when everybody... Talked in Japanese.

482

00:49:29.040 --> 00:49:31.040

Shirley Kuramoto: Everybody talked to me in English.

483

00:49:32.490 --> 00:49:41.589

Shirley Kuramoto: And... I felt... Especially from my boss, I felt like,

484

00:49:42.310 --> 00:49:51.649

Shirley Kuramoto: He was trying to teach me how to be a good Japanese woman. Meaning, don't laugh so loud, don't open your mouth.

485

00:49:52.060 --> 00:49:53.460

Shirley Kuramoto: be careful.

486

00:49:55.490 --> 00:49:59.370

Shirley Kuramoto: you know, especially when I laugh, I laugh kind of loud.

487

00:49:59.480 --> 00:50:04.709

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm enjoying my laughter. No, no, no, no, that's not good at all.

488

00:50:05.580 --> 00:50:06.360

Shirley Kuramoto: Enough.

489

00:50:07.400 --> 00:50:10.550

Shirley Kuramoto: there are certain manners I have to learn.

490

00:50:11.840 --> 00:50:16.770

Shirley Kuramoto: And... I have to be taught

491

00:50:17.080 --> 00:50:24.670

Shirley Kuramoto: what a real boss was, a Japanese boss, not my boss. This is just the, little example.

492

00:50:25.020 --> 00:50:28.060

Shirley Kuramoto: He used to bring in donuts for everybody.

493

00:50:28.380 --> 00:50:35.250

Shirley Kuramoto: So one day, I thought, oh, gee, I'm gonna help out, and I'll bring donuts, too. So I brought in donuts.

494

00:50:36.450 --> 00:50:39.560

Shirley Kuramoto: That was a big no-no. My mistake.

495

00:50:40.120 --> 00:50:44.950

Shirley Kuramoto: Because... I brought these donuts on my own.

496

00:50:45.210 --> 00:50:48.720

Shirley Kuramoto: I was not taught by my boss to bring it.

497

00:50:48.900 --> 00:50:59.709

Shirley Kuramoto: I had to follow my boss's rule. He's the boss. He'll tell me when he wants... the donuts.

498

00:50:59.830 --> 00:51:04.660

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I learned best that way. Another thing is,

499

00:51:04.760 --> 00:51:07.100

Shirley Kuramoto: And so I felt kind of like,

500

00:51:08.280 --> 00:51:11.379

Shirley Kuramoto: I was kind of weighed down on the floor, because

501

00:51:11.520 --> 00:51:19.139

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm not a true Japanese to my boss, I'm a Japanese American. You know, I'm way down there, my ranking.

502

00:51:19.840 --> 00:51:26.550

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I remember he said, alright, go get some,

503

00:51:27.050 --> 00:51:31.090

Shirley Kuramoto: Sushi for... we're gonna have a company lunch.

504

00:51:32.820 --> 00:51:36.879

Shirley Kuramoto: And, you know, everybody... His employees had to work...

505

00:51:37.100 --> 00:51:39.410

Shirley Kuramoto: Until he said it was okay to go home.

506

00:51:39.900 --> 00:51:55.710

Shirley Kuramoto: You don't go to the boss and say, for example, is it alright, like in other American companies, "is it alright if next month I took one week off for a little trip? Is that alright with you?" No, no, that's a big no-no.

507

00:51:55.920 --> 00:52:00.140

Shirley Kuramoto: He'll tell you when you can have time off.

508

00:52:00.770 --> 00:52:07.670

Shirley Kuramoto: But... You see, he could be very generous on one end of the scope.

509

00:52:08.540 --> 00:52:09.810

Shirley Kuramoto: Very generous.

510

00:52:09.970 --> 00:52:16.100

Shirley Kuramoto: The other end... I hate to use this term, but he could be

511

00:52:16.210 --> 00:52:20.840

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm gonna use the word *mean*. He was... could be really mean. No middle.

512

00:52:20.980 --> 00:52:22.910

Shirley Kuramoto: Generous. Mean.

513

00:52:24.960 --> 00:52:27.099

Shirley Kuramoto: If you wanna,

514

00:52:27.630 --> 00:52:37.119

Shirley Kuramoto: Okay, he'll tell a couple people, all right, we're gonna go on a business trip to Japan. Okay, you, you, you, you... I'm gonna take you to Japan, you could bring your wife.

515

00:52:37.850 --> 00:52:41.789

Shirley Kuramoto: And... Me too. You could bring your husband.

516

00:52:42.130 --> 00:52:44.510

Shirley Kuramoto: We're all gonna go on a business trip together.

517

00:52:44.710 --> 00:52:45.390

Shirley Kuramoto: Cool.

518

00:52:45.600 --> 00:52:58.089

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, of course, business trip, only me, my boss, maybe a couple other engineers, I work for a high-tech company, dealing with surround sound, that was our, tool we made.

519

00:53:00.010 --> 00:53:04.540

Shirley Kuramoto: So that was a generosity part, or he'll say, "Okay.

520

00:53:05.440 --> 00:53:07.580

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm gonna take all of you to Las Vegas."

521

00:53:08.420 --> 00:53:13.440

Shirley Kuramoto: And I would say to my husband, he wants us... he's gonna take us to Las Vegas.

522

00:53:13.600 --> 00:53:16.760

Shirley Kuramoto: My husband goes, I don't want to go to Las Vegas.

523

00:53:16.940 --> 00:53:20.100

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, I don't exactly want to grow myself.

524

00:53:21.390 --> 00:53:28.689

Shirley Kuramoto: No. When you're told you're gonna go to Las Vegas, you're gonna go to Las Vegas. No excuses. You're going to...

525

00:53:29.190 --> 00:53:30.470

Shirley Kuramoto: Las Vegas.

526

00:53:31.130 --> 00:53:33.020

Shirley Kuramoto: When you go to Las Vegas.

527

00:53:33.950 --> 00:53:36.870

Shirley Kuramoto: Your gonna do certain things together.

528

00:53:37.810 --> 00:53:39.820

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, that type of thing.

529

00:53:40.340 --> 00:53:49.600

Shirley Kuramoto: All these rules that, I shouldn't say *suffer*. It wasn't suffering, it was,

530

00:53:49.960 --> 00:53:51.360

Shirley Kuramoto: You get used to it.

531

00:53:51.940 --> 00:53:54.230

Shirley Kuramoto: And then another thing that helped me was

532

00:53:55.260 --> 00:53:59.889

Shirley Kuramoto: I think my sense of humor helped me. You have to have a sense of humor, you see.

533

00:54:00.250 --> 00:54:15.410

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I was very friendly with the other employees, because the other employees knew how my boss was. We had to be very careful, and they knew I wasn't going to be a big tattleteller until my boss old so-and-so said this about you. Oh, no, no, no. But they could trust me.

534

00:54:17.210 --> 00:54:25.170

Shirley Kuramoto: So one... one day, my boss says to me, alright, go get some sushi. That's what I was gonna start saying. Go get some sushi.

535

00:54:25.300 --> 00:54:30.319

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I counted, how much do I eat? Oh, okay, so I'll just...

536

00:54:31.000 --> 00:54:39.310

Shirley Kuramoto: count how many everybody's gonna eat. So I bring the sushi, big platter, put it on the table, everybody's waiting.

537

00:54:40.100 --> 00:54:42.449

Shirley Kuramoto: For us to start eating lunch.

538

00:54:43.080 --> 00:54:47.099

Shirley Kuramoto: Well... Nobody touches this platter.

539

00:54:47.210 --> 00:54:48.340

Shirley Kuramoto: of sushi.

540

00:54:49.510 --> 00:54:51.020

Shirley Kuramoto: Everybody's kind of staring.

541

00:54:52.620 --> 00:54:57.300

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, my boss says to me, Look.

542

00:54:58.680 --> 00:55:00.290

Shirley Kuramoto: You didn't buy enough.

543

00:55:01.660 --> 00:55:02.829

Shirley Kuramoto: That's pretty cool.

544

00:55:04.860 --> 00:55:12.540

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, I didn't know the Japanese ate a whole bunch of... I think we ate a whole platter themselves. I didn't know that.

545

00:55:14.120 --> 00:55:18.230

Shirley Kuramoto: I knew I could eat a little bit, maybe a quarter, but not a whole platter.

546

00:55:18.810 --> 00:55:27.939

Shirley Kuramoto: So, okay, so I said, oh, what can I say? Oh, I'm so sorry. All right, I'll go and get some Chinese food.

547

00:55:29.280 --> 00:55:35.250

Shirley Kuramoto: so... It's amazing.

548

00:55:35.580 --> 00:55:43.230

Shirley Kuramoto: I stuck... with this company, because I knew I would get to travel.

549

00:55:43.410 --> 00:55:44.550

Shirley Kuramoto: I knew it.

550

00:55:45.660 --> 00:55:49.930

Shirley Kuramoto: And the sense of humor, getting along with other employees.

551

00:55:50.730 --> 00:55:57.260

Shirley Kuramoto: And, traveling. And, so I was able to travel to Japan several times.

552

00:55:58.230 --> 00:56:00.790

Shirley Kuramoto: I even was sent there myself.

553

00:56:01.520 --> 00:56:08.779

Shirley Kuramoto: to bring, these samples, and, you know, I'm not a marketing person, I'm just a, you know, little...

554

00:56:09.040 --> 00:56:18.050

Shirley Kuramoto: Japanese American girl who knows nothing about technical things, I get to, to, bring this technical...

555

00:56:18.220 --> 00:56:24.379

Shirley Kuramoto: documents and samples, and I went by myself, I went to,

556

00:56:25.330 --> 00:56:29.990

Shirley Kuramoto: Australia. I went to Singapore, all by myself.

557

00:56:31.260 --> 00:56:33.850

Shirley Kuramoto: And...

558

00:56:34.570 --> 00:56:41.879

Shirley Kuramoto: you know, I have to kind of smile, because, you know, it happened so long ago, and I wasn't afraid.

559

00:56:42.620 --> 00:56:46.390

Shirley Kuramoto: I just went and did my duty, came back.

560

00:56:46.540 --> 00:56:54.520

Shirley Kuramoto: And, when we went to this sales meeting, I was the only woman, and you know, I'm older.

561

00:56:54.820 --> 00:56:57.799

Shirley Kuramoto: And I remember when I was introduced

562

00:56:58.390 --> 00:57:04.279

Shirley Kuramoto: to, his business associates. He would introduce me this way.

563

00:57:05.150 --> 00:57:19.569

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, before, I used to have this really young secretary, but now I have this old one. Well, I kept quiet, you know, with a sense of, you know, keep quiet, keep quiet, be calm.

564

00:57:20.310 --> 00:57:21.910

Shirley Kuramoto: Got that sense of humor

565

00:57:22.040 --> 00:57:23.560

Shirley Kuramoto: and you'll be alright.

566

00:57:24.350 --> 00:57:28.690

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I was taken out to lunch.

567

00:57:29.070 --> 00:57:30.359

Shirley Kuramoto: out one day.

568

00:57:31.200 --> 00:57:44.840

Shirley Kuramoto: And my boss, you know, in Japan, they have displays of foods in the window outside in front of the restaurant, so my boss says, which dish would you like to have? You know?

569

00:57:45.250 --> 00:57:47.699

Shirley Kuramoto: And I thought, oh, I'd like to have this one.

570

00:57:48.760 --> 00:57:54.840

Shirley Kuramoto: And, it was something like a Hawaiian, what's that ice, Your face.

571

00:57:55.080 --> 00:57:55.980

Shirley Kuramoto: Yes.

572

00:57:56.450 --> 00:57:57.940

Shirley Kuramoto: Something like that, you know.

573

00:57:58.430 --> 00:58:04.319

Shirley Kuramoto: I'd like to have that. He goes, remember, he's still my boss. He goes, no, no, no.

574

00:58:04.630 --> 00:58:08.710

Shirley Kuramoto: A person of your age never eats that kind of chicken.

575

00:58:08.990 --> 00:58:15.059

Shirley Kuramoto: Dish. That's not good. I have to have something else. Damn, still boss, whatever I eat.

576

00:58:15.570 --> 00:58:18.279

Shirley Kuramoto: Finally, I had the opportunity

577

00:58:18.400 --> 00:58:30.939

Shirley Kuramoto: when I was able to, like, this, from this Japanese company, somebody said to this young woman, "can you show Shirley around?" You know, you "could both go show her around the town?"

578

00:58:31.540 --> 00:58:32.730

Shirley Kuramoto: And so...

579

00:58:32.930 --> 00:58:44.449

Shirley Kuramoto: She said, what would you like to do? Or, you know, and I said, do you mind if we go and get this thing? I wasn't able to... is it okay? I'd like to go to that point.

580

00:58:44.630 --> 00:58:49.630

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I had, kind of a...

581

00:58:51.840 --> 00:58:59.230

Shirley Kuramoto: shall I say, interesting experience working with the Japanese, but

582

00:58:59.370 --> 00:59:05.560

Shirley Kuramoto: I didn't have that sense of community, even in this Japanese company, because

583

00:59:06.760 --> 00:59:12.299

Shirley Kuramoto: you know, I'm... I was still a Japanese American. They're still from Japan.

584

00:59:12.710 --> 00:59:17.420

Shirley Kuramoto: They were very interested in what

585

00:59:17.850 --> 00:59:28.130

Shirley Kuramoto: I ate. They were interested in what Japanese Americans did. When I had them come over to my home, for example, they were interested to see my home.

586

00:59:28.300 --> 00:59:30.370

Shirley Kuramoto: This Japanese-American woman's home.

587

00:59:30.860 --> 00:59:37.500

Shirley Kuramoto: they come... They're surprised! Oh my gosh! She's got this kimono hanging down!

588

00:59:37.650 --> 00:59:40.410

Shirley Kuramoto: They don't do that in their homes. Everything's modern.

589

00:59:40.860 --> 00:59:41.970

Shirley Kuramoto: But me.

590

00:59:42.580 --> 00:59:50.690

Shirley Kuramoto: I wanted to have some *Japanese* cultural things as decorations for me. That was important. I had my kimono hanging down.

591

00:59:51.400 --> 01:00:02.680

Shirley Kuramoto: I have, of my... my husband's swords are decorated. I have a lot of Japanese,

592

01:00:02.820 --> 01:00:05.240

Shirley Kuramoto: cultural, Japanese cultural things.

593

01:00:05.460 --> 01:00:14.050

Shirley Kuramoto: decorated in my home, which surprised them, because they don't do that. When they... when these Japanese came from Japan here.

594

01:00:14.180 --> 01:00:24.610

Shirley Kuramoto: They want to have a home that looks American, not Japanese. But here, I'm the opposite. Everything's Japanese.

595

01:00:27.530 --> 01:00:35.640

Tom Izu: So, surely, speaking about your sense of community and the differences you just described, which are really interesting.

596

01:00:35.640 --> 01:00:54.210

Tom Izu: Going back in time to when you were a teenager, I assume that's after the camps and after World War II, did you feel like you belonged to a community then, or were there any social clubs in your teenage years that helped develop their identity?

597

01:00:54.500 --> 01:00:59.390

Shirley Kuramoto: Not at all. You know why? Because by that time, my parents

Owned a plant nursery in Menlo Park.

598

01:00:59.620 --> 01:01:06.599

Shirley Kuramoto: I know they saved their money and finally opened this nursery. It was right next to the railroad track, you know, but it was still their own nursery.

599

01:01:07.390 --> 01:01:11.299

Shirley Kuramoto: And so... I was not allowed to

600

01:01:11.530 --> 01:01:14.410

Shirley Kuramoto: stay after school. I had to come home

601

01:01:14.920 --> 01:01:20.390

Shirley Kuramoto: right away. By that time, I, they had two more children.

602

01:01:21.150 --> 01:01:32.180

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I had to come home and babysit, I had to do domestic work in the house. Well, my mother worked, too, in the nursery. You know, she was so busy visiting outside.

603

01:01:33.070 --> 01:01:36.139

Shirley Kuramoto: And so, I never got to,

604

01:01:38.120 --> 01:01:42.219

Shirley Kuramoto: Even be in a, some kind of,

605

01:01:42.560 --> 01:01:50.849

Shirley Kuramoto: organization for young kids at the church, even, because I know what happened was this nice lady,

606

01:01:51.360 --> 01:01:55.709

Shirley Kuramoto: Picked me up to go to this, church event.

607

01:01:56.320 --> 01:01:57.889

Shirley Kuramoto: For young people.

608

01:01:58.080 --> 01:02:03.489

Shirley Kuramoto: And so my parents said, okay, that's okay, you know, so she took me, but she brought me home at 9 o'clock in the evening.

609

01:02:03.910 --> 01:02:11.979

Shirley Kuramoto: And I remember that it didn't go well with my father to bring this young person nine o'clock in the evening. That was not...

610

01:02:12.210 --> 01:02:21.190

Shirley Kuramoto: not nice at all, so I could never go back to any kind of a church event. So, unfortunately,

611

01:02:21.940 --> 01:02:24.249

Shirley Kuramoto: There was this isolation.

612

01:02:24.360 --> 01:02:26.229

Shirley Kuramoto: Where I was at home.

613

01:02:27.050 --> 01:02:37.529

Shirley Kuramoto: Doing all this domestic help, or, you know, helping cooking, babysitting, cleaning, whatever, in our own house, and

614

01:02:37.670 --> 01:02:50.559

Shirley Kuramoto: But I didn't have to work in the nursery to do watering or anything like that. I just took care of everything in the house. So, no, I...

615

01:02:50.990 --> 01:03:00.050

Shirley Kuramoto: did not have any kind of sense of belonging, of any kind of community. It was more like an isolation, actually. We did have

616

01:03:00.550 --> 01:03:06.749

Shirley Kuramoto: Relatives, friends over all the time, but... It was just visitors.

617

01:03:09.410 --> 01:03:21.659

Taro Pali: Shirley. How did the transition... so that time period, going into, like, young adulthood, did you change your participation? Are you seeking out more community?

618

01:03:21.870 --> 01:03:33.099

Taro Pali: Did anything change as you became a younger adult?

619

01:03:35.480 --> 01:03:38.689

Shirley Kuramoto: Okay, younger adult, okay, is out, in your twenties, let's say. Okay, let me start with high school, maybe, first.

So, I went to,

620

01:03:38.820 --> 01:03:43.140

Shirley Kuramoto: Live, down the street in, you know, this...

621

01:03:43.390 --> 01:03:45.820

Shirley Kuramoto: There are a lot of mansions down the road, you know?

622

01:03:47.060 --> 01:03:52.660

Shirley Kuramoto: I went to work for this, senior couple.

623

01:03:53.180 --> 01:03:54.449

Shirley Kuramoto: What to do.

624

01:03:54.750 --> 01:03:56.940

Shirley Kuramoto: And they had a cook.

625

01:03:57.300 --> 01:03:59.359

Shirley Kuramoto: Permanent cook, living cook.

626

01:03:59.520 --> 01:04:08.820

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, they hired me to live there during the summer, to, help, do ironing.

627

01:04:09.020 --> 01:04:17.829

Shirley Kuramoto: like... Housework, and to be the server at the dinners, even at the dinner parties.

628

01:04:18.220 --> 01:04:22.770

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I was... That's what I did to earn my money.

629

01:04:22.920 --> 01:04:27.149

Shirley Kuramoto: And I did that, with what I earned.

630

01:04:27.270 --> 01:04:35.420

Shirley Kuramoto: I was able to buy school clothes. That's... that's what I did, for one thing. So, ben...

631

01:04:35.820 --> 01:04:38.269

Shirley Kuramoto: I do remember, though, this one time.

632

01:04:38.710 --> 01:04:47.950

Shirley Kuramoto: I was serving this... some kind of soup, to, the, the *mister* of this.

633

01:04:49.820 --> 01:04:57.140

Shirley Kuramoto: house... And as I was serving the soup, I spilled it on him!

634

01:04:58.880 --> 01:05:02.450

Shirley Kuramoto: I had to.

635

01:05:03.590 --> 01:05:08.840

Shirley Kuramoto: get his napkin and dry him. I shouldn't laugh.

636

01:05:09.420 --> 01:05:18.869

Shirley Kuramoto: Then, also, you know, I wasn't very good in ironing, especially other people's other clothes.

637

01:05:19.100 --> 01:05:26.809

Shirley Kuramoto: And this lady... She had this... Bra, it was pretty big.

638

01:05:28.940 --> 01:05:31.899

Shirley Kuramoto: And I wasn't used to her iron.

639

01:05:32.430 --> 01:05:37.110

Shirley Kuramoto: And the iron stayed on this white bra a little bit too long.

640

01:05:38.900 --> 01:05:44.169

Shirley Kuramoto: It kind of got burned! (laughter) But I didn't tell... say anything.

641

01:05:44.410 --> 01:05:50.209

Shirley Kuramoto: I just folded this one completely, and I put it away.

642

01:05:50.920 --> 01:05:56.049

Shirley Kuramoto: And then it was after that that lady said to me, surely.

643

01:05:56.620 --> 01:05:59.829

Shirley Kuramoto: I noticed you did something to my bra!

644

01:06:00.710 --> 01:06:04.159

Shirley Kuramoto: Okay, so let me give... next.

645

01:06:06.210 --> 01:06:13.180

Shirley Kuramoto: And then I went to, San Mateo Junior High School, and I became a schoolgirl. A lot of us were schooled.

646

01:06:13.490 --> 01:06:15.580

Shirley Kuramoto: A girl or schoolboy.

647

01:06:15.730 --> 01:06:18.400

Shirley Kuramoto: We stayed with a family.

648

01:06:18.940 --> 01:06:27.740

Shirley Kuramoto: And, we, help babysit, help them do some domestic work, and, help...

649

01:06:27.860 --> 01:06:36.959

Shirley Kuramoto: feed, you know, their family and babysit. So, I was assigned to this couple with two daughters.

650

01:06:37.220 --> 01:06:43.999

Shirley Kuramoto: And, they had this nice little, in the garage, this nice little room.

651

01:06:44.140 --> 01:06:45.620

Shirley Kuramoto: where I stayed.

652

01:06:46.110 --> 01:06:51.669

Shirley Kuramoto: And, so I became their schoolgirl. And I worked, I went to school during the day.

653

01:06:51.800 --> 01:06:56.100

Shirley Kuramoto: And, in the night, I would come home and babysit.

654

01:06:56.230 --> 01:07:03.210

Shirley Kuramoto: the girls and help, their mother, do... the missus do the cooking. Now, this...

655

01:07:03.780 --> 01:07:10.660

Shirley Kuramoto: what was unusual was, I mean, this missus, she was a lousy cook. She didn't know how to cook.

656

01:07:10.990 --> 01:07:14.529

Shirley Kuramoto: The only thing she knew how to do was bake this wonderful cake.
(laughter)

657

01:07:14.700 --> 01:07:16.499

Shirley Kuramoto: *That's all she knew.*

658

01:07:16.710 --> 01:07:19.340

Shirley Kuramoto: But anyway, so,

659

01:07:21.570 --> 01:07:28.180

Shirley Kuramoto: still, I was not with my cultural community. The only thing I felt that I belonged

660

01:07:29.960 --> 01:07:41.609

Shirley Kuramoto: in a sense, in a community, was to be on my time off to be with other schoolboys or schoolgirls, especially the ones from Hawaii.

661

01:07:42.620 --> 01:07:46.630

Shirley Kuramoto: And so, we have something in common.

662

01:07:47.040 --> 01:07:50.740

Shirley Kuramoto: So it's just like a little community.

663

01:07:50.870 --> 01:07:51.679

Shirley Kuramoto: you know.

664

01:07:52.070 --> 01:07:56.179

Shirley Kuramoto: That was the only time I felt like I belonged to a group.

665

01:07:56.440 --> 01:07:57.640

Shirley Kuramoto: at that time.

666

01:07:57.880 --> 01:07:59.839

Shirley Kuramoto: But not a Japanese group.

667

01:08:01.400 --> 01:08:02.800

Shirley Kuramoto: And then,

668

01:08:02.910 --> 01:08:10.269

Shirley Kuramoto: weekends, I had time off, and I would go home, and then come back during the, Come on.

669

01:08:11.870 --> 01:08:13.759

Shirley Kuramoto: Week, or week in.

670

01:08:13.970 --> 01:08:14.880

Shirley Kuramoto: Okay.

671

01:08:15.270 --> 01:08:23.460

Shirley Kuramoto: And so that was my early... Time so... Anything else?

672

01:08:23.810 --> 01:08:30.249

Taro Pali: Did that change in your 20s? Like... Yes. Oh, that was, like, high school and into your 20s?

673

01:08:30.819 --> 01:08:41.830

Shirley Kuramoto: Definitely. Now, you know, I was... Stayed at home, never... able to... Join any kind of organizations.

674

01:08:42.870 --> 01:08:46.440

Shirley Kuramoto: And... and, here I was.

675

01:08:47.359 --> 01:08:50.540

Shirley Kuramoto: But anyway, right before I was twenty,

676

01:08:50.660 --> 01:08:55.560

Shirley Kuramoto: I found a job as an accountant clerk at Stanford University.

677

01:08:55.720 --> 01:09:01.080

Shirley Kuramoto: Because I always remember the person who hired me, accounting department, he said.

678

01:09:01.770 --> 01:09:09.799

Shirley Kuramoto: well, you have to start someplace, so you could start here. And I was a clerk typist, clerk accountant, therefore.

679

01:09:10.060 --> 01:09:12.649

Shirley Kuramoto: Maybe about three years, you know?

680

01:09:13.399 --> 01:09:20.070

Shirley Kuramoto: And, and so... Kind of skip forward.

681

01:09:20.790 --> 01:09:25.450

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, one day, I came home.

682

01:09:25.960 --> 01:09:28.160

Shirley Kuramoto: I made that announcement to my mother.

683

01:09:29.100 --> 01:09:42.629

Shirley Kuramoto: I said, Mama, I have something to tell you. Now, up to that time, you know, our... our family went on fishing, camping trips every... every year. So, came home, Mama, I have something to tell you.

684

01:09:44.250 --> 01:09:45.899

Shirley Kuramoto: I have a new job now.

685

01:09:46.609 --> 01:09:47.710

Shirley Kuramoto: What is that?

686

01:09:48.340 --> 01:09:50.770

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, I got a job at Washington.

687

01:09:51.630 --> 01:09:53.650

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh, my mama says.

688

01:09:54.010 --> 01:09:59.199

Shirley Kuramoto: "Wonderful! They have good fishing up there in Washington. That's great."

689

01:09:59.880 --> 01:10:07.240

Shirley Kuramoto: I said, "no, mama, it's not that Washington. It's Washington, D.C. It's not the other end of the United States."

690

01:10:11.310 --> 01:10:17.670

Shirley Kuramoto: So... That was my first step of... Freedom.

691

01:10:18.500 --> 01:10:21.859

Shirley Kuramoto: independence that I never experienced.

692

01:10:23.740 --> 01:10:31.340

Shirley Kuramoto: I remember saying goodbye to my family. I could still see myself, this little gray suit.

693

01:10:31.760 --> 01:10:33.699

Shirley Kuramoto: This little red hat.

694

01:10:35.710 --> 01:10:43.849

Shirley Kuramoto: And I said goodbye to them on the airplane. I found myself at the YWCA at Washington, D.C.

695

01:10:44.770 --> 01:10:51.829

Shirley Kuramoto: And I got a job as a clerk typist, and the State Department, At the security department.

696

01:10:52.980 --> 01:10:55.619

Shirley Kuramoto: I didn't know anything about security departments.

697

01:10:56.220 --> 01:11:03.779

Shirley Kuramoto: didn't know anything about Washington, D.C, but from then on, I started to, mature.

698

01:11:04.170 --> 01:11:10.499

Shirley Kuramoto: and learn, actually, about the government. I knew all the government officials, the...

699

01:11:11.080 --> 01:11:15.539

Shirley Kuramoto: buildings, I was three blocks from the White House.

700

01:11:15.640 --> 01:11:23.129

Shirley Kuramoto: The, security department I work for were agents that you see on TV today. They're the ones that protect

701

01:11:23.710 --> 01:11:31.880

Shirley Kuramoto: the president, you know, VIPs, That kind of, security agents.

702

01:11:32.150 --> 01:11:33.289

Shirley Kuramoto: And,

703

01:11:36.670 --> 01:11:47.340

Shirley Kuramoto: so... The... my bosses, the two of them, they had a pretty high grade.

704

01:11:47.740 --> 01:11:48.550

Shirley Kuramoto: Sorry.

705

01:11:49.590 --> 01:11:51.270

Shirley Kuramoto: or their rank.

706

01:11:51.530 --> 01:12:00.130

Shirley Kuramoto: Of course, I was only a clerk typist, so mine was low. However, I still had a top secret clearance. However.

707

01:12:00.650 --> 01:12:13.830

Shirley Kuramoto: That top secret clearance was for my level, not a really high-level top secret, because if you really have a top secret level, you're... you never have meetings in a building.

708

01:12:14.180 --> 01:12:16.120

Shirley Kuramoto: You, you go up in the...

709

01:12:16.860 --> 01:12:20.630

Shirley Kuramoto: Sky, I mean, air is someplace, that's where you have your meetings.

710

01:12:22.270 --> 01:12:27.780

Shirley Kuramoto: So I saw a lot of, secret documents.

711

01:12:28.360 --> 01:12:36.510

Shirley Kuramoto: And then I was also able to type, I remember, John Kennedy's resume, because one of the agents was a good friend.

712

01:12:36.700 --> 01:12:39.600

Shirley Kuramoto: And then also, I started,

713

01:12:40.580 --> 01:12:45.340

Shirley Kuramoto: going to this Presbyterian church, just because

714

01:12:46.560 --> 01:13:02.210

Shirley Kuramoto: Eisenhower went... was a member of that church, and I thought, oh, gee, I'd like to go to that. And I became a member. I was baptized in this Presbyterian church. First time I became a Christian. And then I became involved with the,

715

01:13:02.560 --> 01:13:17.660

Shirley Kuramoto: young adult activities, became more involved, you know, and then my roommate, she was from Nova Scotia, she was a Methodist, and she invited me to her church activities. So it was the first time I had church activities, but

716

01:13:17.960 --> 01:13:22.659

Shirley Kuramoto: as a, an employee of the State Department, we...

717

01:13:22.930 --> 01:13:31.500

Shirley Kuramoto: employees were encouraged to, whenever VIPs came in from the airport, we were encouraged to go to the streets and

718

01:13:31.630 --> 01:13:40.429

Shirley Kuramoto: wave, you know, they want some crowds waiting for the VIPs to come, so I got to go there. And then, there's embassy parties. We would...

719

01:13:40.800 --> 01:13:50.560

Shirley Kuramoto: We would go there, and when they have a... today, we see presidents having this press conference, you know, you see reporters there and all that, a small group.

720

01:13:51.080 --> 01:13:53.210

Shirley Kuramoto: We were encouraged.

721

01:13:53.340 --> 01:13:58.300

Shirley Kuramoto: to be in the audience, so I got to go here, well, at that time, Nixon.

722

01:13:58.860 --> 01:14:03.419

Shirley Kuramoto: He had a beautiful voice, I remember that. He'd have his...

723

01:14:03.540 --> 01:14:13.210

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, so it was an exciting time for me, and also, we were, filmed one time for this Washington, D.C. travel film, where,

724

01:14:13.950 --> 01:14:19.339

Shirley Kuramoto: we were, they were filming Career Girls in Washington.

725

01:14:19.620 --> 01:14:27.670

Shirley Kuramoto: walking down the street, going to their work, you know, so that's what I did. And so,

726

01:14:28.180 --> 01:14:36.629

Shirley Kuramoto: I was involved... I was really busy. I went to, art museums, all kinds of museums. I took a bus to,

727

01:14:36.940 --> 01:14:47.829

Shirley Kuramoto: New York City, all by myself, I thought, oh, New York City! I'm going to New York City on the bus, and I'll take a Gray Line tour, you know, that'll be safe for me.

728

01:14:47.990 --> 01:14:54.670

Shirley Kuramoto: I go there, New York City, take this gray line, bus tours, I lined up

729

01:14:55.230 --> 01:14:59.090

Shirley Kuramoto: Besides, in back of these two,

730

01:14:59.200 --> 01:15:03.500

Shirley Kuramoto: Asian dark-haired girls, young girls.

731

01:15:03.990 --> 01:15:20.440

Shirley Kuramoto: The young girl looks behind me, and it's my girlfriend that I knew from Hawaii, from California, and she was right in front of me in New York City. That was so unusual. So, I got to spend time touring with my girlfriends, you know. I did that.

732

01:15:20.460 --> 01:15:31.970

Shirley Kuramoto: I toured Virginia, all over there, and started liking traveling, and I didn't mind going myself. It didn't... I was not afraid.

733

01:15:33.740 --> 01:15:45.960

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, so I was there about over three years, I think, and not one time... this is remarkable... not one time, even on holidays, did I feel homesick.

734

01:15:46.560 --> 01:15:51.469

Shirley Kuramoto: I never went back home a lot of those years to be visited.

735

01:15:51.630 --> 01:15:54.130

Shirley Kuramoto: My family. At all.

736

01:15:54.350 --> 01:16:00.359

Shirley Kuramoto: In fact, my parents were thinking that they'd come and visit me one time, you know, but I never...

737

01:16:00.570 --> 01:16:05.410

Shirley Kuramoto: that was the most exciting job I had in my whole life.

738

01:16:06.640 --> 01:16:12.309

Shirley Kuramoto: Because of my new independence, living independently.

739

01:16:13.580 --> 01:16:21.520

Shirley Kuramoto: becoming a Christian, I mean, you know, baptized a Christian, meeting or seeing.

740

01:16:21.820 --> 01:16:25.459

Shirley Kuramoto: different people, and the other employees I met.

741

01:16:26.090 --> 01:16:32.739

Shirley Kuramoto: that I became friends with. Some were not clerks like me, you know.

742

01:16:33.090 --> 01:16:35.779

Shirley Kuramoto: Maybe I was the only cook typist.

743

01:16:35.880 --> 01:16:37.640

Shirley Kuramoto: The others were,

744

01:16:37.820 --> 01:16:45.799

Shirley Kuramoto: people who were assigned to go overseas, they would say, well, you know, Shirley, I'm gonna be gone for two years because I'm gonna go

745

01:16:45.950 --> 01:16:50.009

Shirley Kuramoto: here or there in Europe, so I won't see you till you come back.

746

01:16:50.240 --> 01:16:55.979

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, but my boss, told me, you know, Shirley, I think you should,

747

01:16:56.150 --> 01:16:59.460

Shirley Kuramoto: Get your, got it.

748

01:16:59.610 --> 01:17:03.120

Shirley Kuramoto: secretary ranking, because there's gonna be in Belgium.

749

01:17:03.260 --> 01:17:07.760

Shirley Kuramoto: some kind of fair, and I'd like you to go, if you... if you pass this test.

750

01:17:07.870 --> 01:17:11.229

Shirley Kuramoto: Well... I didn't pass the test.

751

01:17:11.330 --> 01:17:19.110

Shirley Kuramoto: But I took stenotype, you know, the little machine that's used in the courthouse. I was able to master that

752

01:17:19.310 --> 01:17:21.280

Shirley Kuramoto: To be able to,

753

01:17:21.720 --> 01:17:33.830

Shirley Kuramoto: record, regular speaking. I could record it, so I mastered that, but unfortunately, I didn't pass my test. But anyway, so after about a little over two years.

754

01:17:35.470 --> 01:17:41.419

Shirley Kuramoto: This boss I had never met in security. He was more top over my two bosses.

755

01:17:41.710 --> 01:17:42.770

Shirley Kuramoto: apples.

756

01:17:44.300 --> 01:17:51.169

Shirley Kuramoto: he called me into his office, and I thought, hmm, you know, wonder, what, did I do anything?

757

01:17:51.900 --> 01:17:53.449

Shirley Kuramoto: He said, surely?

758

01:17:55.030 --> 01:17:56.590

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm gonna be gone.

759

01:17:56.780 --> 01:17:59.970

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm going to go to Europe for two years, I won't be back.

760

01:18:01.140 --> 01:18:02.350

Shirley Kuramoto: But surely?

761

01:18:03.230 --> 01:18:07.259

Shirley Kuramoto: When I come home, I don't want you to be here.

762

01:18:07.760 --> 01:18:15.859

Shirley Kuramoto: I want you to go home to California, where you belong, because if you stay here, you're gonna end up being an *old maid*.

763

01:18:16.560 --> 01:18:18.030

Shirley Kuramoto: I want you to go home.

764

01:18:20.330 --> 01:18:23.100

Shirley Kuramoto: So that's what I did. I came home.

765

01:18:24.320 --> 01:18:26.010

Shirley Kuramoto: As soon as I got home.

766

01:18:28.060 --> 01:18:38.039

Shirley Kuramoto: Mama says to me, you know, they're just starting to build all these variants, Hewlett Packard, all these high-tech companies starting to develop in the Stanford Hills, you know?

767

01:18:38.960 --> 01:18:42.299

Shirley Kuramoto: My mother was so excited, I'm finally home.

768

01:18:42.560 --> 01:18:44.500

Shirley Kuramoto: Of course.

769

01:18:44.690 --> 01:18:46.370

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm sure she missed me.

770

01:18:47.760 --> 01:18:50.130

Shirley Kuramoto: But how much she miss me out loud.

771

01:18:51.750 --> 01:18:52.440

Shirley Kuramoto: But...

772

01:18:52.800 --> 01:18:59.669

Shirley Kuramoto: She said, Shirley, why don't you go work for one of those companies? You know, that'd be wonderful for you.

773

01:19:00.610 --> 01:19:08.770

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, when you leave home, I'm telling you young people, maybe you'll have a different experience. When you leave home, it's hard to go back home.

774

01:19:08.940 --> 01:19:11.889

Shirley Kuramoto: To live with your family again, your parents.

775

01:19:13.050 --> 01:19:13.950

Shirley Kuramoto: And...

776

01:19:14.570 --> 01:19:25.119

Shirley Kuramoto: I didn't want to be home anymore. That was it. I left home, and I want to keep going. So, I said to, but then, I,

777

01:19:25.840 --> 01:19:27.960

Shirley Kuramoto: went to San Francisco to live.

778

01:19:28.060 --> 01:19:32.999

Shirley Kuramoto: My mother made sure that I was living in a safe place, was a Japantown.

779

01:19:33.130 --> 01:19:43.530

Shirley Kuramoto: you know, she found a place in Japantown, *temporarily*, anyway. But anyway,

780

01:19:44.400 --> 01:19:47.340

Shirley Kuramoto: I got this job, or this,

781

01:19:48.560 --> 01:19:51.620

Shirley Kuramoto: I think it was some kind of a Christian...

782

01:19:52.350 --> 01:19:56.839

Shirley Kuramoto: Church, some kind of a little company. Something to do with books.

783

01:19:57.770 --> 01:20:02.359

Shirley Kuramoto: And, over there, I could use my stenotype machine, finally.

784

01:20:03.270 --> 01:20:11.680

Shirley Kuramoto: What happened was, On the morning that I was to go to work, I got up late.

785

01:20:13.740 --> 01:20:15.320

Shirley Kuramoto: So embarrassed!

786

01:20:15.750 --> 01:20:21.550

Shirley Kuramoto: I couldn't tell the company that I got up late for my first day at job.

787

01:20:22.210 --> 01:20:24.059

Shirley Kuramoto: So I called in, and I said.

788

01:20:24.440 --> 01:20:32.769

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm so sorry, but I found another job. I decided to go to another job, because I couldn't tell them I got up late.

789

01:20:33.440 --> 01:20:34.870

Shirley Kuramoto: I was too embarrassed.

790

01:20:35.070 --> 01:20:42.110

Shirley Kuramoto: Subsequently, I found a job with this company called Luria Brothers. They were in the scrap iron business.

791

01:20:42.220 --> 01:20:46.510

Shirley Kuramoto: And, in the, San Francisco business district, you know.

792

01:20:46.730 --> 01:20:54.839

Shirley Kuramoto: This was the most beautiful office I ever worked in my life. Beautiful furniture, and everybody had beautiful furniture.

793

01:20:55.710 --> 01:20:59.700

Shirley Kuramoto: So, the manager who interviewed me.

794

01:20:59.980 --> 01:21:02.130

Shirley Kuramoto: oh.

795

01:21:04.210 --> 01:21:06.560

Shirley Kuramoto: Seemed interested to hire me.

796

01:21:06.710 --> 01:21:09.279

Shirley Kuramoto: And she said, this is what you're gonna do.

797

01:21:09.620 --> 01:21:13.490

Shirley Kuramoto: You're gonna have to, find out,

798

01:21:14.070 --> 01:21:21.850

Shirley Kuramoto: About what tonnage the scrap firms, you know, are gonna be exchanged and blah blah blah, but the tonnage.

799

01:21:21.990 --> 01:21:23.080

Shirley Kuramoto: So I said.

800

01:21:23.220 --> 01:21:27.789

Shirley Kuramoto: this job is not going to suit me at all, because I'm not good at math at all.

801

01:21:27.950 --> 01:21:39.550

Shirley Kuramoto: No, I don't think so. She said, oh no, it's easy. All you do is put... put these numbers in your computer, and it'll tell you the answer, so you don't have to worry about being bad at math.

802

01:21:42.700 --> 01:21:46.229

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I was there, and then...

803

01:21:46.460 --> 01:21:50.010

Shirley Kuramoto: My friend, Japanese friend.

804

01:21:50.420 --> 01:21:55.910

Shirley Kuramoto: She was, into some activities in Japantown, San Francisco.

805

01:21:57.030 --> 01:22:02.280

Shirley Kuramoto: And so that was the first time that Ed.

806

01:22:02.510 --> 01:22:11.510

Shirley Kuramoto: seeing the word Japantown was new to me, to be a part of a Japantown community, so to speak.

807

01:22:13.710 --> 01:22:22.789

Shirley Kuramoto: And... but I moved out of there because I would hear these, I don't know, it was not in a good area at all when you hear, what is it?

808

01:22:23.020 --> 01:22:31.699

Shirley Kuramoto: something in the background, who are they that, at Christmas time, they come out with the little pots, for... who are they called?

809

01:22:32.030 --> 01:22:42.149

Shirley Kuramoto: Yes, I would... I didn't think it was [Salvation Army?]...yes, anyway, I'm gonna skip that. And then...

810

01:22:42.910 --> 01:22:53.030

Shirley Kuramoto: And that's where I met my husband, where I introduced... well, he was introduced to me at home.

811

01:22:53.200 --> 01:22:58.259

Shirley Kuramoto: An introduction, a true introduction, where, this

812

01:22:58.630 --> 01:23:10.029

Shirley Kuramoto: insurance man knew there was a single man, who just came from Minnesota. He was still single, and they knew I was still single. And of course, I did have

813

01:23:10.560 --> 01:23:21.540

Shirley Kuramoto: a couple other suitors, which, didn't go well with my parents, because they wanted to know their backgrounds. Who were their parents? Where did they live? And all that.

814

01:23:21.800 --> 01:23:40.879

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, I wasn't free. For example, if I met the student from Stanford University, who, you know, very friendly, nice young man who said he played tennis, and I said, oh, you play tennis? Well, I have a tennis racket, I'm not good. Oh, so let's get together and play tennis Saturday.

815

01:23:41.060 --> 01:23:44.159

Shirley Kuramoto: So... He comes knocking on the door.

816

01:23:45.270 --> 01:23:50.330

Shirley Kuramoto: And my mother answers, you know, Mama, "Who are you?"

817

01:23:50.950 --> 01:23:52.490

Shirley Kuramoto: "What's your name?"

818

01:23:53.400 --> 01:23:54.679

Shirley Kuramoto: "Why are you here?"

819

01:23:55.930 --> 01:23:59.129

Shirley Kuramoto: He says, "oh, I came to play tennis with Shirley."

820

01:24:00.780 --> 01:24:04.510

Shirley Kuramoto: "No, she's not. No! She's not going anywhere."

821

01:24:04.700 --> 01:24:06.659

Shirley Kuramoto: "She has to help me at home."

822

01:24:07.020 --> 01:24:08.600

Shirley Kuramoto: That kind of thing.

823

01:24:08.830 --> 01:24:16.549

Shirley Kuramoto: No, but, so my husband was brought in by this friend, and I didn't know anything about

824

01:24:17.220 --> 01:24:24.220

Shirley Kuramoto: anything that's going on that day, all my mother said was, you have to be home today, we're having company. That's it.

825

01:24:24.890 --> 01:24:30.849

Shirley Kuramoto: So, this man brings my poor husband... I think my husband's pretty, pretty nervous by then. He comes in.

826

01:24:31.270 --> 01:24:36.749

Shirley Kuramoto: And, my mother says to me right away, go get the coffee, reserve it, yeah.

827

01:24:37.090 --> 01:24:45.070

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I'm still clueless, you know? Why is this young man here? He looks kind of nervous.

828

01:24:45.560 --> 01:24:46.330

Shirley Kuramoto: M.

829

01:24:46.540 --> 01:24:52.300

Shirley Kuramoto: We're just sitting, starting to eat our dessert. I had a piano in my living room, where we sat, you know.

830

01:24:52.940 --> 01:25:01.939

Shirley Kuramoto: My little young sister... She comes directly to the piano, and she starts playing, "Here Comes the Bride."

831

01:25:05.340 --> 01:25:09.489

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm so upset. I went right to my sister, I said.

832

01:25:09.710 --> 01:25:25.920

Shirley Kuramoto: go away, go away. That's what she... that was the start of my, friendship with my husband. I was married to him for, 63 years, and then, unfortunately, he passed away,

833

01:25:26.030 --> 01:25:30.559

Shirley Kuramoto: in an accident, falling in the front of his face.

834

01:25:30.920 --> 01:25:34.189

Shirley Kuramoto: Wherever we went, my husband and I traveled.

835

01:25:34.520 --> 01:25:40.840

Shirley Kuramoto: to Japan many times. He had also been in Japan as an interpreter in the army.

836

01:25:41.350 --> 01:25:45.889

Shirley Kuramoto: We went to Europe, but we travel quite a bit.

837

01:25:46.290 --> 01:25:48.159

Shirley Kuramoto: Which, I was glad.

838

01:25:48.310 --> 01:25:56.489

Shirley Kuramoto: about, you know, I have very good memories, but every time we went someplace, he always fell down. Always.

839

01:25:56.700 --> 01:26:01.760

Shirley Kuramoto: Fell at the front of his face all the time, but never got injured, you know, bad enough.

840

01:26:01.920 --> 01:26:09.770

Shirley Kuramoto: But unfortunately, this last time, he did injure him himself, so, you know, never recovered.

841

01:26:10.360 --> 01:26:14.909

Shirley Kuramoto: But, it was wonderful years of experience with my husband.

842

01:26:18.240 --> 01:26:25.450

Daniel Baron: Going back to your early years of life, what do you consider some of the most historical events?

843

01:26:28.000 --> 01:26:29.849

Taro Pali: Like, most impactful events.

844

01:26:31.590 --> 01:26:37.199

Shirley Kuramoto: Yes, well, definitely the time that we went to the camps, definitely.

845

01:26:37.320 --> 01:26:40.970

Shirley Kuramoto: And although I was... Young.

846

01:26:41.340 --> 01:26:42.340

Shirley Kuramoto: a kid.

847

01:26:42.840 --> 01:26:45.160

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, no, really, what's going on.

848

01:26:45.370 --> 01:26:50.910

Shirley Kuramoto: And it wasn't explained to me by my parents. This is why we're going, this is, you know...

849

01:26:51.880 --> 01:26:55.220

Shirley Kuramoto: the reason you have to go to a Japanese school, you know.

850

01:26:56.460 --> 01:26:59.529

Shirley Kuramoto: I just went along with,

851

01:27:00.500 --> 01:27:05.779

Shirley Kuramoto: Being a part of their family, and did what they... Wanted me to do.

852

01:27:06.170 --> 01:27:08.159

Shirley Kuramoto: I never questioned it.

853

01:27:09.130 --> 01:27:16.679

Shirley Kuramoto: So I think that was the impact, that life alone. And then when I went back to school, we never studied about

854

01:27:16.850 --> 01:27:22.229

Shirley Kuramoto: about it at all. Not one word, because I remember, even in,

855

01:27:23.580 --> 01:27:32.700

Shirley Kuramoto: high school, I think senior year. Even the teachers would say something...

856

01:27:34.960 --> 01:27:42.040

Shirley Kuramoto: It wasn't harmful, but something would come up which made me feel like...

857

01:27:42.390 --> 01:27:45.720

Shirley Kuramoto: I was not important, because I was Japanese.

858

01:27:46.180 --> 01:27:47.040

Shirley Kuramoto: You know.

859

01:27:47.540 --> 01:27:52.059

Shirley Kuramoto: So... And I never told anybody about that either.

860

01:27:52.180 --> 01:27:54.990

Shirley Kuramoto: I, I kept everything inside.

861

01:27:55.660 --> 01:27:57.810

Shirley Kuramoto: I could speak about it openly.

862

01:27:58.860 --> 01:28:10.249

Shirley Kuramoto: It's strange that I could think about these things after, my senior year's retirement, when I volunteered at the Japanese American Museum.

863

01:28:10.510 --> 01:28:17.579

Shirley Kuramoto: I didn't know much. I had to learn about my background, I had to,

864

01:28:18.200 --> 01:28:20.119

Shirley Kuramoto: Write a letter to the,

865

01:28:21.390 --> 01:28:26.159

Shirley Kuramoto: archives in Washington, D.C, to get records of my family.

866

01:28:26.810 --> 01:28:28.080

Shirley Kuramoto: What went on?

867

01:28:28.980 --> 01:28:31.740

Shirley Kuramoto: Of course, I paid about \$200, you know.

868

01:28:31.960 --> 01:28:48.190

Shirley Kuramoto: But there was a record of every single thing when I went to the hospital, when I went to the dentist, every little thing. And my father, you know, we hear about people losing their property and everything. Of course, that's true.

869

01:28:49.520 --> 01:28:56.339

Shirley Kuramoto: Of course, we didn't have property because we lived in that little cottage, you know, since my father was a gardener.

870

01:28:56.690 --> 01:28:58.869

Shirley Kuramoto: But he did have... own this car.

871

01:28:59.490 --> 01:29:01.369

Shirley Kuramoto: I think it was the Model T.

872

01:29:02.910 --> 01:29:05.880

Shirley Kuramoto: And he had just bought four new tires for it.

873

01:29:06.340 --> 01:29:07.869

Shirley Kuramoto: When we had to move.

874

01:29:08.180 --> 01:29:10.670

Shirley Kuramoto: And he refused to sell it.

875

01:29:11.360 --> 01:29:14.659

Shirley Kuramoto: They kept it in a barn or something like that.

876

01:29:14.960 --> 01:29:19.880

Shirley Kuramoto: And, he finally, in this archives.

877

01:29:20.150 --> 01:29:26.420

Shirley Kuramoto: document on my father. There's more pages about the bargaining

878

01:29:27.010 --> 01:29:37.029

Shirley Kuramoto: of him trying to sell this car, and he finally got what he wanted. Now, I can't remember. It was something like he got, like, \$470 or something.

879

01:29:37.340 --> 01:29:44.459

Shirley Kuramoto: But that was after we were in camp. So I think that was the main, impact

880

01:29:44.680 --> 01:29:48.870

Shirley Kuramoto: Of the change that... Certainly.

881

01:29:49.330 --> 01:29:52.409

Shirley Kuramoto: would have changed my life.

882

01:29:53.400 --> 01:29:54.280

Shirley Kuramoto: Really.

883

01:29:58.020 --> 01:30:14.630

Steve Nav: I have to do a time check, it's about 12:15pm. I'm sorry, not 9:15am, 12:15pm. I know you... But you don't have to be in a neighborhood. What about you folks? Do you have time to continue with that?

884

01:30:15.470 --> 01:30:18.480

Shirley Kuramoto: Yeah, my, sister-in-law, she dropped me off there, she's gonna pick me up, and I'm gonna call her. Okay. When we're finished.

885

01:30:19.000 --> 01:30:33.459

Steve Nava: I'm good. Okay, you're good. Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

Tom Izu: Oh, what about Ed, though? I don't know what kind. Yeah, yeah.

886

01:30:33.460 --> 01:30:41.909

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh, okay. Well, you know what, I just want to finish about the Japanese community, because it's when...In the senior years, so my husband, when he retired, he started volunteering at Yu-Ai Kai Senior Center in Japan.

887

01:30:42.260 --> 01:30:55.870

Shirley Kuramoto: Then, after I retired, he became very active. When I retired, I became active in the senior community, too. What I started to do was,

888

01:30:56.070 --> 01:30:57.369

Shirley Kuramoto: write

889

01:30:57.980 --> 01:30:58.990

Shirley Kuramoto: plays.

890

01:30:59.560 --> 01:31:04.520

Shirley Kuramoto: And you know, short...

891

01:31:05.320 --> 01:31:09.159

Shirley Kuramoto: Let's say, like, a fourth, fifth level play.

892

01:31:11.370 --> 01:31:13.010

Shirley Kuramoto: humorous plays.

893

01:31:13.650 --> 01:31:16.109

Shirley Kuramoto: So, kind of, that...

894

01:31:16.320 --> 01:31:30.970

Shirley Kuramoto: what the teacher said a long time ago kind of came true, because I wanted the seniors to be able to laugh at something funny. So what I did was I produced it, I directed it, I had, even though

895

01:31:31.170 --> 01:31:48.850

Shirley Kuramoto: all the staff members of the Yu-Ai Kai being in my plays, and so I wrote several plays... plays, but I never became an actor myself. I just directed them. So that was, and then I tried to put some cultural, Japanese cultural,

896

01:31:49.250 --> 01:31:51.870

Shirley Kuramoto: subjects within my play.

897

01:31:52.410 --> 01:31:55.829

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, I started taking Taiko drums.

898

01:31:56.030 --> 01:32:03.729

Shirley Kuramoto: my favorite activity. I started learning senior Taiko drums, though. I just loved doing the drumming, and then,

899

01:32:04.110 --> 01:32:08.209

Shirley Kuramoto: What else? Let's see... some exercise clips? I can't remember.

900

01:32:08.890 --> 01:32:15.260

Shirley Kuramoto: But, that's how I started feeling this sense of, community.

901

01:32:16.000 --> 01:32:26.080

Shirley Kuramoto: was after I retired. And of course, being, with, you know, with the, Japanese American

902

01:32:26.370 --> 01:32:32.690

Shirley Kuramoto: Museum. And then my, my, yearning to learn everything.

903

01:32:32.890 --> 01:32:34.860

Shirley Kuramoto: I had to learn everything.

904

01:32:35.580 --> 01:32:40.350

Shirley Kuramoto: That I never learned, because of course I go to Asian American history, but so...

905

01:32:41.080 --> 01:32:44.649

Shirley Kuramoto: To this day, here I'm almost 92 years old.

906

01:32:46.450 --> 01:32:52.069

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm not only interested, and this is because I started working at a Japanese American Museum.

907

01:32:52.810 --> 01:32:58.769

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm interested in other Asian American history.

908

01:32:59.500 --> 01:33:00.750

Shirley Kuramoto: the....

909

01:33:03.390 --> 01:33:13.130

Shirley Kuramoto: How about the Filipino Americans? How about the Chinese Americans? I'm more interested now, so I have so much to learn, and it's thanks

910

01:33:14.140 --> 01:33:16.500

Shirley Kuramoto: for what the museum...

911

01:33:16.800 --> 01:33:23.340

Shirley Kuramoto: imparted to me. I have to thank the museum, because I went to volunteer there. And... and now.

912

01:33:23.940 --> 01:33:30.809

Shirley Kuramoto: I want to learn so many things, and I'm not going to learn everything in life, you know? There's so much to learn.

913

01:33:31.850 --> 01:33:39.679

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I'm very lucky that I have this opportunity now, while

914

01:33:40.220 --> 01:33:49.040

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm, still able to, independently through visiting and talking.

915

01:33:49.430 --> 01:33:53.560

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I like being with young people.

916

01:33:55.560 --> 01:34:06.030

Shirley Kuramoto: I have two children, but I already told you they became my parents, but no, I don't have any grandchildren, but I met this young, actually, he's from my Red Ladder,

917

01:34:06.150 --> 01:34:09.840

Shirley Kuramoto: Theater Improv workshop. Professional actor.

918

01:34:09.960 --> 01:34:14.769

Shirley Kuramoto: Or actors who, teaches us how to use our imagination.

919

01:34:14.960 --> 01:34:21.780

Shirley Kuramoto: And it's not only that, I've been taught, I've been with them for...

920

01:34:21.980 --> 01:34:24.790

Shirley Kuramoto: Over a year, or a year and a half, you know.

921

01:34:25.500 --> 01:34:27.469

Shirley Kuramoto: What I learned in this workshop?

922

01:34:27.710 --> 01:34:30.780

Shirley Kuramoto: Is learning about myself.

923

01:34:31.240 --> 01:34:35.349

Shirley Kuramoto: *We're all shy people.* I mean, I'm *extra shy*, I'm really shy.

924

01:34:35.800 --> 01:34:40.730

Shirley Kuramoto: About learning to, learning about my own self.

925

01:34:41.230 --> 01:34:45.320

Shirley Kuramoto: Liking myself, being positive, and to accept me for

926

01:34:45.820 --> 01:34:51.149

Shirley Kuramoto: myself, and I've been learning that, and it kind of frees me.

927

01:34:51.620 --> 01:34:53.380

Shirley Kuramoto: Not to be so.

928

01:34:53.680 --> 01:34:55.680

Shirley Kuramoto: Intimidated, you know?

929

01:34:56.460 --> 01:34:58.790

Shirley Kuramoto: And to respect others.

930

01:34:59.450 --> 01:35:06.969

Shirley Kuramoto: And, not to judge others. That's one thing I did learn when I worked at the security department.

931

01:35:08.010 --> 01:35:11.259

Shirley Kuramoto: Just because we read in the newspaper.

932

01:35:12.520 --> 01:35:17.469

Shirley Kuramoto: the media about, say, a certain person. I'm not going to describe what it is, but...

933

01:35:17.600 --> 01:35:27.740

Shirley Kuramoto: we read about this person, and we think, wow, this person is really something. Oh, wow, I'm gonna have to go see this person speak, because, oh my gosh.

934

01:35:28.380 --> 01:35:37.220

Shirley Kuramoto: the things this person has done is really remarkable. Humanitarian, all this... Overseas, and everything.

935

01:35:37.400 --> 01:35:41.209

Shirley Kuramoto: But... In the records, I see...

936

01:35:42.120 --> 01:35:47.580

Shirley Kuramoto: what kind of true person this person is. Is he really what's described in the media?

937

01:35:47.730 --> 01:35:50.719

Shirley Kuramoto: No. We don't see the other side.

938

01:35:51.090 --> 01:36:00.549

Shirley Kuramoto: So... I've learned... that about people. The people...how are they inside?

939

01:36:00.820 --> 01:36:02.150

Shirley Kuramoto: and the outside?

940

01:36:03.120 --> 01:36:05.090

Shirley Kuramoto: As human beings, you know.

941

01:36:05.560 --> 01:36:12.000

Shirley Kuramoto: So that's more important to me, and I've learned that and... but *regardless*

942

01:36:12.350 --> 01:36:15.300

Shirley Kuramoto: to be kind to others, you know.

943

01:36:15.680 --> 01:36:19.789

Shirley Kuramoto: to give respect, and don't judge. That's one thing I've learned.

944

01:36:22.210 --> 01:36:27.169

Steve Nava: We're gonna skip to, Taro's question number ten.

945

01:36:27.960 --> 01:36:46.850

Taro Pali: Oh, okay, sure. So I know we talked a lot about, your Japanese-American experience, but I wanted to... I was interested in knowing, especially, like, in your youth, how did your experience being Japanese American, how did it change with different historical events? Because I'm sure, like, with Pearl Harbor and everything like that,

946

01:36:47.190 --> 01:36:52.080

Taro Pali: How do you feel like... Your experience in society changed?

947

01:36:52.390 --> 01:36:55.809

Taro Pali: with... The changing world and historical events.

948

01:36:59.770 --> 01:37:08.069

Shirley Kuramoto: Okay, so... I... You know, I wasn't really... kind of exposed.

949

01:37:09.170 --> 01:37:10.480

Shirley Kuramoto: to others.

950

01:37:11.460 --> 01:37:23.220

Shirley Kuramoto: Like, people of my age in any kind of, say, church activities, organizations, to hear Discussions. Openly.

951

01:37:23.550 --> 01:37:25.050

Shirley Kuramoto: What's going on?

952

01:37:25.200 --> 01:37:30.579

Shirley Kuramoto: Because I feel like I was living in, kind of, more in isolation.

953

01:37:31.400 --> 01:37:35.510

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I... Can't tell you.

954

01:37:36.630 --> 01:37:42.019

Shirley Kuramoto: About changes, until the only changes I...

955

01:37:42.600 --> 01:37:47.840

Shirley Kuramoto: noticed was when I was years older, but not when I was that young.

956

01:37:52.290 --> 01:37:54.779

Shirley Kuramoto: We can go to Daniel's question number 15.

957

01:37:56.560 --> 01:37:59.960

Daniel Baron: What does it mean to belong to a community?

958

01:38:00.220 --> 01:38:06.680

Daniel Baron: In your opinion, and do you think, like, throughout your lifetime, it has changed, maybe due to personal experiences?

959

01:38:08.600 --> 01:38:15.600

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, yes, I was never, let's put it this way.

960

01:38:16.740 --> 01:38:18.000

Shirley Kuramoto: at home.

961

01:38:18.510 --> 01:38:25.949

Shirley Kuramoto: I was not... never a good housekeeper. I was a lousy cook, but I was more organized outside of the home.

962

01:38:26.280 --> 01:38:29.470

Shirley Kuramoto: And I had a very understanding husband.

963

01:38:30.060 --> 01:38:31.950

Shirley Kuramoto: Who, who knew...

964

01:38:32.140 --> 01:38:39.079

Shirley Kuramoto: what it meant to... for me to be outside the home. And he was busy himself outside the home.

965

01:38:39.510 --> 01:38:48.100

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh, So... I kept... busy. I, actually, what I did was,

966

01:38:48.710 --> 01:39:04.599

Shirley Kuramoto: Let me see, I think maybe it was, like, about forty? My husband says, you know, "you've been going to so many art schools and art classes and photography." You know, I loved photography. I wanted to be a photographer.

967

01:39:05.620 --> 01:39:15.159

Shirley Kuramoto: And then, I took all these art classes, and my credits start building up, so my husband says, why don't you go get a degree?

968

01:39:15.290 --> 01:39:16.050

Shirley Kuramoto: you know.

969

01:39:16.540 --> 01:39:22.870

Shirley Kuramoto: bachelor's degree, because swimming, so I had about 70 or something. So I, I think...

970

01:39:23.080 --> 01:39:24.900

Shirley Kuramoto: I was about 41.

971

01:39:25.870 --> 01:39:35.869

Shirley Kuramoto: when I went to San Jose State, forty-one, and I finally got a bachelor's in Creative Arts. Then, I waited till I was about sixty,

972

01:39:36.200 --> 01:39:45.040

Shirley Kuramoto: And I went back to San Jose State, because I knew that it was going to be cheap for me to pay the tuition. Very cheap.

973

01:39:45.410 --> 01:39:47.040

Shirley Kuramoto: So I... when I was...

974

01:39:47.430 --> 01:39:55.930

Shirley Kuramoto: in my 60s, I went back to, San Jose State, and by that time, I'm in a master's program, you know, and

975

01:39:56.090 --> 01:39:59.630

Shirley Kuramoto: I decide that I gotta find out what's gonna happen to myself.

976

01:39:59.760 --> 01:40:02.370

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm a senior already.

977

01:40:02.990 --> 01:40:07.079

Shirley Kuramoto: So I took a course in, gerontology.

978

01:40:07.690 --> 01:40:16.599

Shirley Kuramoto: And I was able to finally get a gerontology certification so I could, you know, help other seniors in the community.

979

01:40:18.400 --> 01:40:25.910

Shirley Kuramoto: And then I had an opportunity. I remember my counselor wanting to talk to me about future...

980

01:40:26.180 --> 01:40:31.400

Shirley Kuramoto: classes to get a, I suppose, master's, I'm just guessing, you know.

981

01:40:31.940 --> 01:40:33.629

Shirley Kuramoto: And I thought to myself.

982

01:40:34.970 --> 01:40:45.399

Shirley Kuramoto: Am I gonna be in school until I'm seventy years old? I don't know about being 70 years old and going to school, because I'm having such a hard time

983

01:40:45.640 --> 01:40:52.470

Shirley Kuramoto: in my gerontology class, it's really hard, you know? Art classes, it's okay. It's a breeze.

984

01:40:53.110 --> 01:41:00.179

Shirley Kuramoto: But gerontology, and then, I was thinking about it, and I thought, no.

985

01:41:00.530 --> 01:41:04.159

Shirley Kuramoto: I'm not... I'm not going to go.

986

01:41:06.010 --> 01:41:08.599

Shirley Kuramoto: But, I, I needed one,

987

01:41:08.830 --> 01:41:15.589

Shirley Kuramoto: extra unit, I think, to, and my course, I remember.

988

01:41:16.040 --> 01:41:20.319

Shirley Kuramoto: And I decided to be a teacher's aide in downtown San Jose.

989

01:41:20.900 --> 01:41:22.140

Shirley Kuramoto: in the school.

990

01:41:22.820 --> 01:41:25.930

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh, I was so nervous the first two weeks.

991

01:41:27.140 --> 01:41:31.990

Shirley Kuramoto: The teacher yelled at the kids all the time. There was one big fellow.

992

01:41:32.460 --> 01:41:39.150

Shirley Kuramoto: he got into trouble all the time. They had a police coming in, and then,

993

01:41:39.380 --> 01:41:40.659

Shirley Kuramoto: They were told...

994

01:41:40.780 --> 01:41:49.439

Shirley Kuramoto: to speak only English, and I thought, oh my gosh, I gotta tell the teacher one day, you know, after two weeks of this, I can't stand it.

995

01:41:50.150 --> 01:41:56.810

Shirley Kuramoto: I waited till the end of the class to tell the teacher, I'm sorry, this is not working out for me.

996

01:41:59.070 --> 01:41:59.870

Shirley Kuramoto: Alright.

997

01:41:59.990 --> 01:42:04.380

Shirley Kuramoto: So... That last day of class.

998

01:42:05.020 --> 01:42:06.219

Shirley Kuramoto: Am I thinking?

999

01:42:07.290 --> 01:42:13.029

Shirley Kuramoto: I sit on this table, surrounded by these students.

1000

01:42:14.150 --> 01:42:24.859

Shirley Kuramoto: And in front of me was this tall boy who always gets in trouble. And I thought, oh no, my last day, and that troublemaker's sitting right in front of my...

1001

01:42:25.290 --> 01:42:26.590

Shirley Kuramoto: follow me here.

1002

01:42:28.810 --> 01:42:32.489

Shirley Kuramoto: And then... We all sit down.

1003

01:42:33.180 --> 01:42:35.520

Shirley Kuramoto: It's time to start by lessons.

1004

01:42:36.020 --> 01:42:44.589

Shirley Kuramoto: This troublemaker says to me, Mrs. Kuramoto? He calls me Mrs. Kuramoto.

1005

01:42:44.850 --> 01:42:46.590

Shirley Kuramoto: "Mrs. Kuramoto."

1006

01:42:46.760 --> 01:42:49.169

Shirley Kuramoto: "You're so nice to help us today."

1007

01:42:50.060 --> 01:42:52.010

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh.

1008

01:42:54.490 --> 01:42:58.520

Shirley Kuramoto: And then... Recess time.

1009

01:42:59.930 --> 01:43:03.590

Shirley Kuramoto: I stayed because of that "troublemaker." I stayed.

1010

01:43:07.260 --> 01:43:13.300

Shirley Kuramoto: And... At the end of the session, he,

1011

01:43:13.710 --> 01:43:21.680

Shirley Kuramoto: stood next to the teacher. You know, when it was, recess time? The...

1012

01:43:22.580 --> 01:43:26.890

Shirley Kuramoto: this young man would come next to me and start chatting. He'd say.

1013

01:43:26.910 --> 01:43:44.400

Shirley Kuramoto: "Look what we have to make for Mother's Day. It's this cheap soap, and we have to rack it up." And I said, listen, it's recess, I don't want you to get in trouble. Now, you hurry up and go play with your friends. You know, I don't want you to get in trouble now. Somehow, this teacher must have...

1014

01:43:45.520 --> 01:43:51.420

Shirley Kuramoto: noticed that we kind of bonded. Somehow. I didn't know how, but somehow she knew.

1015

01:43:51.550 --> 01:43:59.300

Shirley Kuramoto: Because the last time, he was standing next to his teacher, and they had this little gift for me, you know, for helping out.

1016

01:43:59.800 --> 01:44:09.450

Shirley Kuramoto: And, so, they gave me, thank you letters from the students, you know. And, she had this, young man

1017

01:44:10.280 --> 01:44:13.690

Shirley Kuramoto: Young boy, give me this gift, you know?

1018

01:44:13.800 --> 01:44:24.930

Shirley Kuramoto: And so, I was riding on a bus going home, and I started reading all these thank-you letters, you know, and then I came across the letter that this troublemaker

1019

01:44:25.750 --> 01:44:29.110

Shirley Kuramoto: wrote to me, "dear Mrs. Kuramoto..." you know.

1020

01:44:30.200 --> 01:44:34.159

Shirley Kuramoto: I started crying.

1021

01:44:34.340 --> 01:44:38.920

Shirley Kuramoto: I mean, I still kind of get teary-eyed when I think about that young man.

1022

01:44:39.080 --> 01:44:46.139

Shirley Kuramoto: even today, and I really hope to this day that he became a nice young adult.

1023

01:44:46.420 --> 01:44:55.089

Shirley Kuramoto: have a nice family, then end up going to... being incarcerated someplace, you know? So that's what changed me.

1024

01:44:57.700 --> 01:45:07.779

Steve Nava: Oh, would you mind asking number 17, and we'll kind of open it up to, maybe Tom have some questions to follow up, or no, but could you ask number 17?

1025

01:45:07.780 --> 01:45:22.369

Taro Pali: Okay, sure. Yeah, so nowadays, what places or spaces do you find yourself going to the most? I know that you go to the Japanese American Museum a lot, and then what is rewarding to you about being in these spaces?

1026

01:45:22.740 --> 01:45:29.590

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, you know, what I find now is because after COVID, COVID changed everything. I'm sure.

1027

01:45:30.020 --> 01:45:33.350

Shirley Kuramoto: I've noticed, you know, some of these,

1028

01:45:33.540 --> 01:45:37.490

Shirley Kuramoto: well-known, like, the Chinese... I forgot the name of that.

1029

01:45:37.670 --> 01:45:39.080

Shirley Kuramoto: Chinese restaurant.

1030

01:45:39.560 --> 01:45:41.020

Shirley Kuramoto: folded down.

1031

01:45:41.180 --> 01:45:42.819

Shirley Kuramoto: It's replaced by...

1032

01:45:42.930 --> 01:45:55.340

Shirley Kuramoto: well, that's not replaced yet, but some other businesses have been replaced. Oh, I also, I forgot to tell you that I worked for Nichi Bei Busan for a while as a sales clerk, and I just loved working in retail.

1033

01:45:55.570 --> 01:45:57.919

Shirley Kuramoto: But anyway,

1034

01:45:58.780 --> 01:46:05.960

Shirley Kuramoto: What I notice now, when I go to Japantown, it's changed because we have new businesses, and you know.

1035

01:46:06.640 --> 01:46:09.120

Shirley Kuramoto: There's mixed marriages.

1036

01:46:09.860 --> 01:46:18.599

Shirley Kuramoto: That's changed. You don't see, just the Japanese Americans. You see, you know, mixtures of,

1037

01:46:19.070 --> 01:46:23.530

Shirley Kuramoto: Y-you know they're not,

1038

01:46:23.970 --> 01:46:27.410

Shirley Kuramoto: 100% Asian, or they could be many things.

1039

01:46:27.650 --> 01:46:29.350

Shirley Kuramoto: But I respect them.

1040

01:46:29.550 --> 01:46:36.680

Shirley Kuramoto: because I had to learn to respect, you know. So, that's been changing. The crowds I see.

1041

01:46:36.950 --> 01:46:45.840

Shirley Kuramoto: The sceneries, I do want to go back to that tattoo shop upstairs, you know, because...

1042

01:46:46.070 --> 01:46:51.549

Shirley Kuramoto: I haven't had a chance, but... At the Manju Shop...

1043

01:46:52.040 --> 01:46:54.530

Shirley Kuramoto: Except... I just...

1044

01:46:54.640 --> 01:47:07.540

Shirley Kuramoto: nearly fainted. I bought some for my 106-year-old auntie, mind you. She'll turn 107 next month. I want her to be interviewed, but I don't think so.

1045

01:47:08.430 --> 01:47:11.879

Shirley Kuramoto: Oh my gosh, I think they're[manju], what, \$2.50 each?

1046

01:47:12.320 --> 01:47:19.460

Shirley Kuramoto: And I said, how much would this be? \$70? \$70? Oh! Oh my gosh, do you have something cheaper?

1047

01:47:19.750 --> 01:47:33.989

Shirley Kuramoto: So, you know, the prices and the, foods, we have that pizza around the corner. I don't know why I haven't tasted the pizza, but things are changing. It's not like before.

1048

01:47:34.430 --> 01:47:38.340

Shirley Kuramoto: I don't know how to explain it, because I don't live there.

1049

01:47:39.180 --> 01:47:48.900

Shirley Kuramoto: But when I visit there, I always go to the Nijiya Market Store but... Of course, I feel like...

1050

01:47:49.610 --> 01:47:51.919

Shirley Kuramoto: I belong, but yet I don't belong.

1051

01:47:52.100 --> 01:48:00.280

Shirley Kuramoto: My, auntie, my, father's, aunt, I mean, sister, she lived in a

1052

01:48:00.420 --> 01:48:03.880

Shirley Kuramoto: home right across the Buddhist temple.

1053

01:48:04.270 --> 01:48:09.289

Shirley Kuramoto: And she was Mrs. Hagehara. She taught, sewing there.

1054

01:48:10.100 --> 01:48:14.819

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I've seen a picture once hanging in the Japanese American Museum there.

1055

01:48:15.360 --> 01:48:27.759

Shirley Kuramoto: So we would come when I was young. My father would... we would come to Japantown, San Jose, to visit my auntie. So I do remember there is a Japantown, San Jose.

1056

01:48:28.060 --> 01:48:31.669

Shirley Kuramoto: But, now, they're gone.

1057

01:48:32.420 --> 01:48:43.569

Shirley Kuramoto: the building is replaced by some apartment building. I'm not a member of the Buddhist church or Buddhist temple. I do go there when there's, like, a funeral, something like that.

1058

01:48:43.880 --> 01:48:50.120

Shirley Kuramoto: or the other Methodist church, maybe I've been there a couple times, you know, but I'm not a member

1059

01:48:50.520 --> 01:48:59.430

Shirley Kuramoto: of... a church, and speaking of church, I'm very interested in, comparative... comparative religion.

1060

01:48:59.740 --> 01:49:01.690

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I've been to...

1061

01:49:02.110 --> 01:49:09.639

Shirley Kuramoto: all kinds of churches. I've been to the Jewish Temple, I've been to several Buddhist temples.

1062

01:49:10.050 --> 01:49:14.870

Shirley Kuramoto: I've been to a Japanese Seventh-day Adventist church, I've been to a...

1063

01:49:15.160 --> 01:49:19.079

Shirley Kuramoto: Did I say... did I say, African American church?

1064

01:49:19.220 --> 01:49:32.269

Shirley Kuramoto: I've been to that one, because this is what happened. I was in a bus with African American ladies, we were all sitting in the bus, and all of a sudden, this Black lady, I was sitting next to this African-American lady, she says.

1065

01:49:32.490 --> 01:49:35.029

Shirley Kuramoto: We're having this function,

1066

01:49:35.530 --> 01:49:43.380

Shirley Kuramoto: at this church, would you be interested in coming? I said, yes, I would! And so I went to their church,

1067

01:49:43.660 --> 01:49:59.310

Shirley Kuramoto: It was spectacular. I was invited to eat with them, you know, and so, I'm kind of more of a visitor, and I studied comparative religion, and I have deep respect for all religion.

1068

01:49:59.530 --> 01:50:06.500

Shirley Kuramoto: And I have respect for everybody, For their own beliefs?

1069

01:50:08.070 --> 01:50:14.879

Shirley Kuramoto: And, since I've... I've... Been trying to learn not to judge people, you know?

1070

01:50:14.990 --> 01:50:20.050

Shirley Kuramoto: of... So, that's my, my thing.

1071

01:50:22.840 --> 01:50:28.960

Steve Nava: Thank you for sharing all that, and I just want to open it up to any questions, maybe Tom or Noemi.

1072

01:50:29.170 --> 01:50:31.320

Steve Nava: Any follow-up questions?

1073

01:50:32.160 --> 01:50:32.880

Shirley Kuramoto: Yeah.

1074

01:50:34.450 --> 01:50:36.730

Shirley Kuramoto: Shirley, yes. What do you,

1075

01:50:37.140 --> 01:50:39.969

Tom Izu: What are your concerns about the future of Japantown?

1076

01:50:40.160 --> 01:50:43.730

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, I think, though, unless...

1077

01:50:44.120 --> 01:50:49.650

Shirley Kuramoto: And I've heard a rumor that the young people would like...

1078

01:50:50.940 --> 01:50:55.100

Shirley Kuramoto: not to have Japantom fade away. Not to.

1079

01:50:55.330 --> 01:51:01.160

Shirley Kuramoto: But it could happen if we didn't have young activists.

1080

01:51:01.320 --> 01:51:18.019

Shirley Kuramoto: that we've got to preserve Japantown. We've got to preserve the history. That's very important. So I think it's really important when... that they continue with festivals, the museum gives information, I mean, it's... it's...

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01:51:20.400 --> 01:51:21.250

Shirley Kuramoto: It's...

1082

01:51:22.520 --> 01:51:32.299

Shirley Kuramoto: to educate the young generation, and have them educate the younger... their younger generation, but it's important, I think.

1083

01:51:32.610 --> 01:51:38.200

Shirley Kuramoto: Otherwise, we won't have Japan. It'll be full of, housing.

1084

01:51:38.690 --> 01:51:40.900

Shirley Kuramoto: I don't think that should happen.

1085

01:51:41.260 --> 01:51:42.010

Shirley Kuramoto: you know.

1086

01:51:42.600 --> 01:51:46.949

Shirley Kuramoto: And, it would fade.

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01:51:47.470 --> 01:51:52.619

Shirley Kuramoto: We're having a new generation of, of, new cultures.

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01:51:52.740 --> 01:51:55.269

Shirley Kuramoto: So, it's very easy for them to...

1089

01:51:56.210 --> 01:52:02.930

Shirley Kuramoto: take over new businesses, which is non-Asian. Nothing to do with Asian

1090

01:52:03.550 --> 01:52:08.370

Shirley Kuramoto: history, or culture, or anything. All of a sudden, we're going to have something different.

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01:52:08.530 --> 01:52:10.660

Shirley Kuramoto: I don't think that should happen at all.

1092

01:52:16.020 --> 01:52:17.600

Shirley Kuramoto: Any other questions?

1093

01:52:20.330 --> 01:52:26.410

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, just kind of an aside, when you're talking about different religions, were you talking about in Japantown? Because there's...

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01:52:26.570 --> 01:52:30.489

Tom Izu: That's an interesting part of Japantown. It has all these different kinds of churches.

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01:52:30.930 --> 01:52:35.249

Tom Izu: It's been like that. It's been like that for quite a long time. That's right.

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01:52:35.490 --> 01:52:37.580

Tom Izu: So there's kind of an interesting

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01:52:37.770 --> 01:52:40.880

Tom Izu: Intercultural mixture, too, but it's still...

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01:52:41.180 --> 01:52:45.829

Tom Izu: you know, we still call it Japantown.

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01:52:45.950 --> 01:52:49.689

Shirley Kuramoto: That's right, I think, on the corner, I, I think on, is it,

1100

01:52:50.080 --> 01:52:55.839

Shirley Kuramoto: 5th Street, same as the museum. At the end, I see,

1101

01:52:56.190 --> 01:53:05.370

Shirley Kuramoto: these African Americans, you know, I always think... I wish I could go in there and see, you know, would I be allowed to sit in there?

1102

01:53:05.950 --> 01:53:07.659

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, I'm not sure.

1103

01:53:07.900 --> 01:53:11.420

Shirley Kuramoto: And, one of the... my...

1104

01:53:11.930 --> 01:53:15.270

Shirley Kuramoto: Bucket list. One of them, I can't do anymore.

1105

01:53:15.600 --> 01:53:17.590

Shirley Kuramoto: I've always wanted to go to Tibet.

1106

01:53:17.910 --> 01:53:21.359

Shirley Kuramoto: I will always want to go to the monastery.

1107

01:53:21.490 --> 01:53:24.210

Shirley Kuramoto: And I can't do that now, but

1108

01:53:24.300 --> 01:53:43.440

Shirley Kuramoto: But I could do it here. There's a lot of monasteries I could go to. There's one in a big temple in Carmel, great big one, that I've asked my children that I'd like to go there. And it's interesting because... and then another thing is, I'm sure this is kind of silly for you.

1109

01:53:45.560 --> 01:54:00.850

Shirley Kuramoto: I've always wanted to hug a cow, and I found one nearby. It's in Pleasanton, in the hills there. It's... these are Hindu cows. They're run by this Hindu organization.

1110

01:54:01.740 --> 01:54:12.199

Shirley Kuramoto: And this house, they're on the... laying on the ground, and you can lay down and hug them and get them. They're very gentle.

1111

01:54:12.570 --> 01:54:23.949

Shirley Kuramoto: And so, I said I'd like to go, to this, see these comfort cows.

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01:54:24.250 --> 01:54:26.190

Shirley Kuramoto: When it's warm, you know.

1113

01:54:26.780 --> 01:54:31.349

Shirley Kuramoto: But, my children's feeling is, why wait?

1114

01:54:31.770 --> 01:54:46.670

Shirley Kuramoto: till spring. It's like, okay, we'll do it this month. Like, it's almost like, while I'm still healthy, you know, what's gonna happen in January? You never know. We will not go there. And of course, another thing is,

1115

01:54:46.860 --> 01:54:54.890

Shirley Kuramoto: My bucket list is, riding an army jeep. That's been my dream, to have a Jeep.

1116

01:54:55.710 --> 01:55:06.730

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I'm sorry, that has nothing to do with things, but, you know, because I am a Japanese American, and because my parents worked for the Fuller Company.

1117

01:55:07.490 --> 01:55:24.480

Shirley Kuramoto: during the summertime, where they had this army jeep, and Mr. Fuller would take my father and me and my brother to the lake fishing on their army jeep. That's... that's what did it. I always wanted an army jeep.

1118

01:55:25.000 --> 01:55:27.130

Steve Nava: They are pretty cool, ha ha.

1119

01:55:27.360 --> 01:55:31.780

Steve Nava: I had a last question, or maybe two, but what?

1120

01:55:31.940 --> 01:55:40.590

Steve Nava: part of Japanese culture would you like to see preserved in the Japantown area, whether it's San Jose's or San Francisco? Like, what...

1121

01:55:41.110 --> 01:55:45.580

Steve Nava: Of your generation's culture would you like to see preserved?

1122

01:55:45.780 --> 01:55:47.020

Shirley Kuramoto: Yes.

1123

01:55:47.160 --> 01:55:54.750

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, of course, I like to see the temple, Buddhist Temple, the other Methodist church... I like...

1124

01:55:55.100 --> 01:56:02.880

Shirley Kuramoto: Nothing changed, really, but things are changing. Can't help it. I work for the Nichi Bei Busan store.

1125

01:56:04.740 --> 01:56:09.350

Shirley Kuramoto: It seems like the most crowd they have is when it's Obon [Festival] time.

1126

01:56:09.620 --> 01:56:12.190

Shirley Kuramoto: people will come in. They're busy, you know.

1127

01:56:13.640 --> 01:56:19.550

Shirley Kuramoto: But... Other than that, the younger generation.

1128

01:56:20.160 --> 01:56:24.560

Shirley Kuramoto: I mean, this is from my perspective, maybe I'm wrong.

1129

01:56:25.830 --> 01:56:31.209

Shirley Kuramoto: you know, that's only my own perception.

1130

01:56:38.430 --> 01:56:46.540

Shirley Kuramoto: I don't know. You know, things, even at Yu-ai Kai activities, they've stopped certain things.

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01:56:47.340 --> 01:56:49.910

Shirley Kuramoto: activities, you know, after COVID.

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01:56:50.650 --> 01:56:55.319

Shirley Kuramoto: And, what am I trying to get at?

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01:56:58.200 --> 01:57:14.829

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, listen, this is... see, I really don't know, because at that 4th Street Bowl, they still have that Karaoke, see? So that's still the group that's still going on. I'm sure that'll go on for a while. I have never joined that group.

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01:57:15.080 --> 01:57:18.629

Shirley Kuramoto: Went a couple of times, but... Anyway,

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01:57:20.860 --> 01:57:25.090

Shirley Kuramoto: I can't think of anything else, because I'm just...

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01:57:26.130 --> 01:57:32.319

Shirley Kuramoto: so centered just in my own activities, I haven't ventured out more.

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01:57:32.820 --> 01:57:33.830

Shirley Kuramoto: Really.

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01:57:34.970 --> 01:57:53.350

Shirley Kuramoto: So, it's hard for me to really predict and say, oh, that's too bad, but really, I do say that's too bad. I felt bad when [Aki's Bakery](#) moved away. What year was that? Gosh, that was before COVID, I know that. It's been a long time, about ten years ago.

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01:57:53.750 --> 01:58:04.329

Shirley Kuramoto: Did you know the owners? I didn't know the owners, but they moved out. So we now have just a mind juice shop, and whatever,

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01:58:04.670 --> 01:58:13.890

Shirley Kuramoto: desserts we could get is at the store, but store-bought's different, you know. And then, if I take a group out once in a while.

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01:58:14.220 --> 01:58:18.929

Shirley Kuramoto: a mixed group, culturally mixed group, a small group, to Japantown.

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01:58:21.140 --> 01:58:26.820

Shirley Kuramoto: I don't take them to the Japanese restaurant. I should, but I don't.

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01:58:28.140 --> 01:58:31.349

Shirley Kuramoto: Because I take them to [Hukilau](#).

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01:58:31.490 --> 01:58:39.679

Shirley Kuramoto: Because the reason is because they do serve Asians and American foods, like hamburger, hot dog, you know.

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01:58:39.820 --> 01:58:44.510

Shirley Kuramoto: I, I want a variety. That's where I take my group, over there.

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01:58:44.640 --> 01:58:52.049

Shirley Kuramoto: And, I think... It just makes it more comfortable for people with different backgrounds.

1147

01:58:54.720 --> 01:59:12.070

Steve Nava: So, for you, what would be the heart of Japantown? Which top three places, or... Yeah, I would say the heart...

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01:59:12.120 --> 01:59:20.099

Shirley Kuramoto: It seems like the heart, like, Obon, it has some connection to the Buddhist church, it seems to me. Of course, the Wesley Church does something, too. But it seems like the heart is the Buddhist, the Japantown. I mean, the temple is my feeling, I'm not sure.

1149

01:59:20.570 --> 01:59:31.710

Shirley Kuramoto: Because I've never been active there. But it seems things go on over there. They have the members at that location. They have other locations, you know, there at that site, so...

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01:59:32.000 --> 01:59:37.289

Shirley Kuramoto: I think that's the central hub to me, and it's not,

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01:59:37.460 --> 01:59:41.779

Shirley Kuramoto: That little coffee shop, you know.

1152

01:59:42.030 --> 01:59:42.850

Steve Nava: Yeah.

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01:59:44.050 --> 01:59:50.460

Steve Nava: So, in some ways, the values that you want to preserve are kind of like you said earlier, like.

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01:59:51.050 --> 01:59:57.039

Steve Nava: Non-judgmental attitudes and things like that, in terms of the culture?

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01:59:57.890 --> 02:00:07.540

Shirley Kuramoto: Yeah, I suppose, even with a couple new, stores there, you know, of course I like the little things they have, they're all cute.

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02:00:08.180 --> 02:00:13.810

Shirley Kuramoto: All that. But it's really not... even those... maybe...

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02:00:14.230 --> 02:00:16.990

Shirley Kuramoto: a theme of Japanese, but it's really not...

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02:00:18.570 --> 02:00:24.849

Shirley Kuramoto: the Japanese culture that I think of, that we find in, say, the Nichi Bei Busan store.

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02:00:25.160 --> 02:00:39.199

Shirley Kuramoto: where they have the judo equipment, you know, they have the screens, they have the kimonos, you know, that to me is more of a cultural Japanese store, and I hope it remains

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02:00:40.060 --> 02:00:44.560

Shirley Kuramoto: there for a while. I would hate to see that one go.

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02:00:45.260 --> 02:00:46.220

Shirley Kuramoto: Really.

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02:00:47.100 --> 02:00:51.830

Shirley Kuramoto: Because they have a little museum there, too, you know, about the family history.

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02:00:53.670 --> 02:00:57.260

Steve Nava: Sure. Is there any last questions?

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02:00:57.790 --> 02:01:00.829

Steve Nava: Follow-up questions, before we go to...

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02:01:01.090 --> 02:01:08.749

Steve Nava: Number 19, which is Daniels, but, Taro, did you have a last question before we go? Okay. We can go to number nineteen then.

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02:01:09.160 --> 02:01:16.000

Daniel Baron Do you have any questions about this interview process? Or do you want to cover something that we didn't share today?

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02:01:16.690 --> 02:01:25.495

Shirley Kuramoto: You know, I, I think, I covered quite a bit. I went through your questions, and

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02:01:26.140 --> 02:01:28.110

Shirley Kuramoto: I wrote it for myself, you know.

1169

02:01:28.790 --> 02:01:34.820

Shirley Kuramoto: my computer and printer's not even working.

1170

02:01:35.190 --> 02:01:36.329

Shirley Kuramoto: I had to leave.

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02:01:37.170 --> 02:01:46.479

Shirley Kuramoto: my place at 7.30 this morning, because the new roof man was going to come into my driveway, but nothing to do with the question. But,

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02:01:46.770 --> 02:01:57.870

Shirley Kuramoto: I think I gave you extra information that was not really necessary, put it that way, so you'll have to delete that, you know, back to your main question.

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02:01:58.170 --> 02:02:06.109

Shirley Kuramoto: But I was honored to be invited here. I really...

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02:02:06.840 --> 02:02:10.350

Shirley Kuramoto: honored, I have been interviewed by tape.

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02:02:10.670 --> 02:02:16.630

Shirley Kuramoto: This tape is, at the Hoover Library at Stanford, and I listened to my

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02:02:16.890 --> 02:02:19.900

Shirley Kuramoto: Interviewed for the first time two weeks ago.

1177

02:02:20.170 --> 02:02:24.820

Shirley Kuramoto: And I was just rambling on and on and on.

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02:02:24.950 --> 02:02:29.840

Shirley Kuramoto: And I thought, oh my gosh, this is getting so boring!

1179

02:02:32.010 --> 02:02:39.180

Steve Nava: No, we're really, excited about hearing, you know, the details of your life throughout the process of, you know.

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02:02:39.340 --> 02:02:45.529

Steve Nava: Growing up and becoming who you are now. So all the details really just make it richer, you know, with detail.

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02:02:45.640 --> 02:02:58.190

Steve Nava: So we get to know you better, we get to know the history better, you know, and your values, and what you want to see preserved.

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02:02:58.210 --> 02:03:08.470

Shirley Kuramoto: Well, thank you. Well, you saw the documentary that was made. That was half an hour long. And, of course, I never show it to younger children, you know, they're too young. I see. But because you are all young adults, and

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02:03:08.820 --> 02:03:14.980

Shirley Kuramoto: So kind to... Pay attention to some... some...

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02:03:15.250 --> 02:03:19.279

Shirley Kuramoto: details, you know. I was honored to show it to you.

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02:03:20.200 --> 02:03:30.380

Yes, yes. All right, but thank you so much, and I don't know if y'all want to say anything, but...

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02:03:32.690 --> 02:03:39.560

Shirley Kuramoto: Yeah, thank you. Thank you so much. It was such an honor to meet all of you, and I'm... Really looking forward to your futures, your career.

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02:03:39.950 --> 02:03:52.900

Shirley Kuramoto: I hope, this interview has helped me to... Kinda, remember some things.

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02:03:53.000 --> 02:03:55.090

Shirley Kuramoto: And some things that I should...

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02:03:55.330 --> 02:04:05.339

Shirley Kuramoto: try to know more about. Because of the answers, or the questions you had for me. I like to think about them. And I thought about it last night.

1190

02:04:05.340 --> 02:04:15.569

Shirley Kuramoto: All night long, I hardly slept. I think I was, up from 2:30 in the morning, and I had to get out of my house by 7:30.

1191

02:04:15.590 --> 02:04:20.160

Shirley Kuramoto: So, I thank you, because you've inspired me

1192

02:04:20.320 --> 02:04:27.580

Shirley Kuramoto: to think more about what's going to happen to the future of Japan. You've got me thinking now, really.

1193

02:04:27.770 --> 02:04:31.800

Shirley Kuramoto: I don't think I'll be, I love it.

1194

02:04:32.010 --> 02:04:36.569

Shirley Kuramoto: active... activist to preserve Japantown, you know.

1195

02:04:36.870 --> 02:04:37.650

Shirley Kuramoto: But...

1196

02:04:37.810 --> 02:04:43.170

Shirley Kuramoto: I'll be a supporter, for sure, and I... so I... I do want to thank... thank all of you.

1197

02:04:43.480 --> 02:04:50.800

Steve Nava: No, yeah, we're inspired, too. You know, some of the things you bring up give us ideas, and so it's really just an exchange.

1198

02:04:50.990 --> 02:04:58.759

Steve Nava: yeah, we want to see Japantown, you know, grow, but also preserve what's, you know, special about it.

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02:04:58.970 --> 02:05:05.289

Shirley Kuramoto: And so, you know, hearing from you, you kind of give us that sense of what that is. No, I'm still learning.

1200

02:05:05.540 --> 02:05:07.609

Shirley Kuramoto: There's a lot for me to learn.

1201

02:05:08.430 --> 02:05:11.049

Steve Nava: even about my own family. Yeah.

1202

02:05:11.670 --> 02:05:23.229

Steve Nava: So, if you want to get involved in the Oral History Project, you're welcome to, you know, do interviews, too, with us, and work together. Oh, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you. Thank you.