

Alice Utsunomiya, December 10, 2023.m4a

Interviewer's Note:

This interview was recorded at a Social Sunday meeting at Guadalupe Buddhist Church, with one small group playing mahjong in the background and another group listening and sometimes participating in the interview. Interview participants asked that what they said not be included in this published recording and transcript.

The interviewer acknowledges the narrator's use of outdated and inappropriate terms to refer to members of the Black and Asian communities. The interviewer chose not to interrupt and correct the narrator during the interview, however—nor to strike these terms from the interview recording or transcript—so as not to disrupt the narrative flow or authenticity of the narrator's interpretation and perspective.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:00:01] Well, for instance, like my kids, my grandkids and stuff, they always call because they say, Grandma, you always make us laugh. You talk about this, you talk about that. And then, uh, one of my nieces said, you how do you remember these things? And I said, well, I must have a great, and I don't know how to play some of these games and stuff, but my mouth, there's a lot of talking for me. And in fact, they call me in Japanese, "yakamashi masu(?)". That's talkative lady.

Frances: [00:00:39]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:00:41] No, but I've always been not quiet. But it. And I like to relate sometimes, you know, the experience, you know, because, um, going to camp didn't to me mean we were being punished.

Frances: [00:01:02]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:01:03] Yeah, but even some of the older people. See, like, my folks, they were from Japan, you know, but, um, my, my mom and dad, they said it was something we had to do when. See, my dad was taken to Bismarck, North Dakota, um, before. Yeah, we were having we were having supper one night, and it was here in

Guadalupe. My house is not there anymore, but. Okay, but we were having supper, and then two highway patrol came and they said, "Is Mr. Henmi home?" and I said, "Yeah, my dad?" And they said, "Yeah." So they came in and they told us, "Mr. Henmi, get a bag, suitcase." And so he did, and he didn't know what to take. I mean, so he just threw some chonies and stuff, and then they took him and they never said where they were going to take him. But it was a war, you know. So. So anyway, when we, when he came back to join us, uh, we asked him how it was. He said, well, the only thing was they were not prepared for snow.

Frances: [00:02:18]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:02:19] And they went to Bismarck, North Dakota. And so, yeah, you said it was so he, he was happy he didn't get sick. Because it was quite a few men that got sick.

Frances: [00:02:30]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:02:34] A couple of years.

Frances: [00:02:36]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:02:37] And we went all total four years in Gila Bend. That's when we all got together. Yeah. And. Yeah. And then see, like my oldest brother, he graduated from camp 43, 1943. And uh, he went to um, intelligence school and he learned the formal way of speaking. And my dad said his handwriting in Japanese is beautiful, better than his. And he, he outdid my father, who was very smart. But anyway, um, we, we just figured it was something that had to be done. It was, you know, Japan, even if it was our original nationality. So you couldn't hold it against them. It was their country too.

Frances: [00:03:35]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:03:43] And see, you're lucky I like to talk.

Lata Murti: [00:03:46] Yeah I am lucky.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:03:49] Yeah. My my family all say, "Oh there goes grandma." So all of my kids, grandchildren and stuff they like to call me and, well, I kind of kid with them and make them laugh. So I said, well, that's grandma

Lata Murti: [00:04:07] How many grandchildren do you have?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:04:11] I have seven, seven grandchildren.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:04:16] So three boys. And two girls. No, six, five, five, five, five. And then, uh.

Frances: [00:04:25]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:04:25] My oldest granddaughter. Hey. She had four girls and the second one had three girls, and the third one had a twins boy and a girl. And then the fourth one never had. So I have seven grandchildren. And then now they're grown. So I have great grandchildren, but they all live, like in Idaho or Georgia, but they call me.

Frances: [00:04:56]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:00] Two [great grandchildren]

Frances: [00:05:00]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:03] Haven't seen, they're very young, yeah. But I haven't seen the, the great grandchildren. I don't want to travel. I mean I want to see them, but I don't want to fly. I have that feeling

Frances: [00:05:20]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:25] Idaho.

Frances: [00:05:26]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:27] My two granddaughters and my daughter and her husband, they live in Idaho.

Frances: [00:05:34]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:34] Yeah. And then the oldest granddaughter lives in, um. Portland.

Frances: [00:05:40]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:41] Yeah. Portland or Seattle someplace.

Frances: [00:05:45]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:45] And then the, the second one lives in, uh, like Georgia because her husband was in the service.

Frances: [00:05:53]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:05:54] Yeah. So. But they're all scattered. But the second granddaughter was very fortunate. She was able to go to Hawaii because her husband was stationed there. And then, uh, he got shipped to Okinawa. And so this is where she developed some of the Oriental food and seasoning. Because she could go to the store and, you know, so she said, "Grandma, not as good as you, but I can make this and that," so--

Frances: [00:06:28]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:06:29] But they, they've been trying to come but you know with them they have four kids. But yeah they all call me my, my oldest grandson calls me in the morning and calls me in the evening every day.

Frances: [00:06:46]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:06:48] Then my third grandson Matt, that is active in church, I mean in the Obon, he comes over every Wednesday and then we watch Blue Blood. And then at 930 we get some of my nieces and nephews. And then, what's that? Facebook.

Lata Murti: [00:07:09] FaceTime.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:07:10] Yeah, FaceTime. So we talked for about half an hour.

Lata Murti: [00:07:14] That's nice.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:07:15] Yeah. So Yeah. You know and I told Matthew you don't have to stay with Grandma. "I like to," well he likes to have beer with me, you know, but, uh, you know, so I've been, I've been fortunate, um, I, I had no animosity against anything happening. I'm just saying [?] yakamashi, in Japanese, person.

Lata Murti: [00:07:44] So what's your full name?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:07:46] Alice. Yuriko, was Henmi. My maiden name was Henmi. Then I was a Nakahara. Then I became Utsunomiya. Yeah.

Lata Murti: [00:07:59] And,

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:08:00] But I'm the only one in my family that had both names. The English and Japanese.

Lata Murti: [00:08:06] Oh!

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:08:07] See, the doctor that delivered me was a Japanese doctor, a woman doctor, and her name was Alice. And so my mom liked the name. So I have Alice, Yuriko, Henmi, and then my brother, um, the second brother, his name is George, but it's Georgie [?]. But they made it, George, and then I, everybody else just had Japanese and then they adopted, you know, like my brother Peter. Um, his name. He picked up Peter when we were in camp. They didn't want to say. Mito[?] [Japanese name]

Lata Murti: [00:08:51] Where were you born?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:08:53] I was born in Guadalupe. Here in the house. Yeah. We we didn't go to doctor because we didn't have a car. So all of us were born in that house.

Frances: [00:09:02]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:09:03] Which when we came back, was still there for a while, and then it was getting to, you know, where there's a little creek which is going or the house was on this side, okay, of the creek. And it was there for a while. Um, but yeah, it, it wasn't, it was nice. And then, uh, my dad was very devout Buddhist, and so he would come to the church here and then, um, when I was five years old, we walked. It wasn't too far. We walked. And he took me to my first Obon dance or. Yeah. So I don't know if that made me want to teach, uh, Japanese dancing or not, but.

Frances: [00:09:50]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:09:54] It was here.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:09:55] Here. Dancing was in the parking lot over there. And then. They had, you know, the Boy Scout room. We used to sell the noodles there. They had a little window. And then we had booths for kids to play.

Speaker2: [00:10:11]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:10:12] And the thing is that I'm proud of My mom used to cook the rice. To make sushi and stuff.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:10:21] She, she would cook 300 pounds of rice.

Frances: [00:10:25]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:10:27] And so when I came back from Los Angeles and I saw her doing all this. I said, oh my God. And she was getting up in age. So I said, I'll help you Okay. So I started helping her. Then before I knew it, I'm doing it because she's getting older. And so that's how I got started with it. See, because when I was younger and going to school, I went to Christian church because I didn't have a way to come all the way to Guadalupe. So all my friends were going to Christ Methodist. And so just before I, I got out of school. Someone mentioned to my dad that I was going Christian church and he was very strong Buddhist. And so it.

Speaker2: [00:11:19]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:11:20] He started in saying, "Well, I don't think you should live here." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Because you're Christian." I said, "So?" And then he was ready to chase me out. My oldest brother came and he said, "Dad, what are you doing? You're making Alice move." And he said, "She's Christian." So he said, "So? Big deal. What's wrong with that? At least she's going to Church." I mean, you know, "And she's been a good girl." So then he said, "Okay, you could stay." And I didn't want to be an old lady working out in the strawberry farm. So I decided my girlfriends were going to go on vacation. So I packed some stuff and I went with them. I told my folks I, you know, I helped them pick berries for how many years? And I was a hard worker because I competed with my brother because he would pick fast. So anyway, then, uh, when I, I said, "I'm going to move," and I told him I'm going vacation. So on Sunday, when we were supposed to come home, I said, "I'm not coming home, Mom and dad, I'm going to stay until I find a job," because there was nothing here for a young person after school, because all the old ladies were working in the bank and. No, no opportunity. So I went and I stayed with two other ladies, girls and then we stayed together a couple of weeks. And then I thought, no, three is not, because there's always going to be somebody that's going to be out. So, I thought, I don't want to lose friendship over that. So I was looking in a Japanese newspaper and, I said, they're looking for a babysitter.

Frances: [00:13:23]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:13:24] Yeah. So, anyway, I called and it was a Jewish family. And so he said I'll come pick you up and you could talk to my wife. Yeah. So I said okay. So we went and had a talk with her. And then she said, "Can you come this week?"

Move in this week?" I said, "Oh, I but what am I going to do?" She said, "Basically just babysit," because they had, she was five years old, the girl. And so I said, "Oh, okay." So the man came after me and then it happened to be their Hanukkah you know. Yeah. So I'm sitting there talking to them. And then the girl brings me a package and I said, "What is this?" And she said, "It's your Hanukkah present." And, so, I said "Well, yeah, but I just, I mean I haven't even lived here yet." And she said, "No,." See her, her father was um, did um, casual dress wear, you know, like pedal pushers in those days and sports and nothing dressy kind of thing. And so I got a present for seven days.

Frances: [00:14:39]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:14:40] And then and then later on, um, the lady said, "Well, can you set the table, you know, for dinner?" And so I said, "Okay." So I set it for three. And so she said, "What did you set it for just for three." [I] said, "Well, there's just three of you." And she said, "Oh, no, you're going to eat with us like family." And I said, "Oh, no, I could eat in the kitchen." So later on, after a couple of weeks, she asked me, "Why did you say that? And why did you say you want to eat in the kitchen?" I said, "Well, you know, in the movies, the maid, or the, they eat in the kitchen, they don't eat with the family." She said, "Oh no, you're going to be considered family." So you know, it. It just made, made my life easy. You know.

Lata Murti: [00:15:33] So how old were you then?

Frances: [00:15:35]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:15:37] I was not quite 21. And then, um, I was. Looking. For. I worked at an insurance company, but I didn't want to work there downtown. And so.

Frances: [00:15:48]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:15:50] This is also uh

Frances: [00:15:52]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:15:53] [Los Angeles]. But we. Moved. We went to Disneyland and stuff, my girlfriend and I, and then they came home. But I said, "No, I'm going to stay." So then they came back and they looked for a job, too. So I was walking down on Spring Street in Los Angeles and they have a state building. And so I saw it says, "Test." And I said, "Test?" So I walk in there and she said, "Um, can I help you?" And I said, "What is this test?" She says, you know, "We're interviewing and you take a test for a job with the state."

Frances: [00:16:35]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:16:37] So anyway, I took my typing test shorthand I was going to do, but I didn't care for it, so I did typing. And then, um, my typing was good. So I became well classified as a transcriber. So then after I passed that, then they sent me to this room and then you had an oral conversation. They asked you questions and I passed that. Then before I knew it, they gave me three slips of paper. One was a motor vehicle, one was. Franchise tax. And then, uh, I forgot the other one, but they were all state. Okay. So I wanted to go motor vehicles. So anyway, all in one day. So I got the job at motor vehicles as a receptionist. And then.

Lata Murti: [00:17:31] In one day?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:17:32] Huh?

Lata Murti: [00:17:33] All in one day?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:17:34] All in one day.

Frances: [00:17:35]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:17:36] See, now...no, you have to be on the list, and it takes forever. Yeah. I mean, I know because I worked 30 years with the state, but anyway, um, so I found that job, and then I was living with a Jewish family, so, you know, it just everything blended.

Lata Murti: [00:17:54] This was in Orange County?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:17:59] No. Uh, L.A. County,

Lata Murti: [00:18:01] L.A. County.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:18:02] Yeah, it's close to, um, Compton, California.

Lata Murti: [00:18:05] Uh huh!

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:18:06] And have you ever seen. You know, the Coliseum is over here and Motor Vehicles was on on the other side of Harbor Freeway.

Lata Murti: [00:18:16] Near USC?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:18:16] And that's where, where yeah, yeah.

Lata Murti: [00:18:19] That's where I got my license when we first moved to California. Yeah.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:18:24] I stayed there for ten years. I, um, I kind of wanted to, I don't know. Branch out or something, but. Yeah, but after that, I said no. I lost my sister when, uh, she was when she was four years younger than me. But she passed away when she was 47. She had leukemia. Oh. So. Yeah. So I thought, well, then I got married, had two kids, got divorced. So I just decided when I came back, there was no opening. So, um,

Lata Murti: [00:19:09] When you came back here?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:19:11] Yeah. So I had to go to Santa Barbara for one year because there was a state job. Yeah. So then after that, that one year there was an opening in Santa Maria, and that's how I stayed. Yeah, well, it's not to say I have any trouble with colored people, but when I got to thinking I was going to take my kids to school and stuff, I couldn't. I couldn't take them to, I mean, different schools, see, because there ninety nine[?] I'm really not prejudiced with. 95% was all colored.

Lata Murti: [00:19:55] Where?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:19:56] Uh, Los Angeles, off of Jefferson.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:19:59] So if I could have carpooling, just something would have been different. But after a while, I thought, no. It's, uh, because I came from Santa Maria. The first people I saw when I went to Los Angeles were, in fact, like my mom. When we went to vacation, we stopped at this one IHOP restaurant, and we walked in because I was familiar with that store or that restaurant. And then my brother and my mom were just sitting right there and I said, "What's the matter?" And then they said, "There's nothing but black people." I said, "They're alright. They're not going to hurt you." And then they just felt uncomfortable.

Frances: [00:20:51]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:20:54] 1962.

Frances: [00:20:54]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:20:56] See, they had that riot.

Lata Murti: [00:20:58] That's right.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:20:59] Yeah. See, and I was working in motor vehicles and we even the colored people, they, they would come pick me up to go grocery shopping. They didn't want me to go without. So we went as a bunch

Frances: [00:21:14]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:21:15] Yeah.

Frances: [00:21:16]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:21:16] Yeah. So. So those kind of things you know. You just you just can't say because you're colored, you know.

Frances: [00:21:27]

Frances: [00:23:25]

Frances: [00:25:02]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:26:37] They were like 3 or 4 families, we went in two cars. But, um, I told the one lady, I said, "Well, can we leave the kids?" And they said, "No, take the kids with you. You know, keep us together." Yeah. And we did. But as soon subsided, there was one shooting. And so it was from I don't know if you know, Los Angeles, but, um. Oh, there was a big auditorium and somebody was a sniper. And so they told us to stay home one more day and after then it was nothing. But when I saw on TV colored stealing from colored people, you know, the stores, they're taking all the goods from the I mean you know friends and I thought that's terrible, you know, but what are you going to do? And. Yeah.

Frances: [00:27:41]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:30:07] You know, uh, race to me. Um, I don't like to say because you're this. I don't like you or, you know, I just. I like if I talk to the person, they talk back with me, then we're friends. But some people say, oh, because you're Japanese, I'm not going to talk to you. I mean, that's how serious it was after the war. You know, but it's just, um. This way of life. Yeah. You know, but when when the odds are kind of against you.

Speaker2: [00:30:58]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:30:59] So, I. I didn't want my kids to go to 95% only colored at that time. I mean, I was younger.

Frances: [00:31:08]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:31:09] But, uh, anymore. Yeah.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:31:17] Yeah. So then when we moved back it was nice. I mean uh my folks cared them and. But that's part of my interesting life. Well, and I had a husband that gave me two kids, and before I knew it, he was gone. Then I heard he had a young girl, so I then I said, well, I'm glad I did. And I told my daughters, yeah, see. And he never came to see my daughters. See, they're ten and a half months apart. And so, uh, they were close you know. Mhm. But he never, never did see them. Well the oldest one you know and some of the homes, the furnaces on the floor. Mhm. Well my oldest daughter got up and she was cold so she sat on the furnace. So I had a housekeeper that she's retired. So she, she babysat and lived in with me. And so she said um Colleen sat on the furnace and it's all blistered. So I said, okay, I'll be right home. So I called the doctor and he said, no, don't bring her. Just put a tub full of water on a cold, you know, and dunk her every 15 minutes. So in those days, I had a small refrigerator that had only one tray of ice. So I called my ex-husband and I said I need ice. He said how much? I said oh bring me about 10 pounds because. Yeah. And then so he came, he saw how it was a waffle mark on her butt. And then uh I went to [?] and something and I had to dunk her. So then when I finished I said, "Jo Jo (sp.), where did Mr. Nakahara go?" She said, "Oh, he was right here." And we looked outside and his car was gone and his car was gone. He, he didn't even really stay. And then we never saw why--well, I did see him after that, but he never really saw the kids because they were born. I mean, they're ten and a half months apart and my oldest one, that's the one that sat on the furnace when she was young. So. Mhm. Um, and when I, when I got divorced and I moved back home, um, my sister said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Oh, I'm sending Jim the pictures of the kids, because they had school pictures." And she said, "You're dumb!" And she called me "dumb ass." She said, you're dumb. And she said, "He doesn't even see, he doesn't even know what the kids look like. And you're sending him pictures!" And I said, "Well, he is the father." She said, "Well, he doesn't act like it, so don't send him no more pictures." And then as I grew older, I thought maybe they might want to see him. And I got them to basically say yes. Then we found out he had a girlfriend that was 16. So I said, "No way." And then when I told Colleen, the oldest, because they were out of school by the time, but she said, "I don't want to see him." And I said, the thing that made me sad was, you know, you're walking, you'd be walking. And he walked this way, and you're related. You don't even know. I said, "That's sad." But she said, "No, I did want to see him at one time, but no."

[00:35:03]

Lata Murti: [00:35:04] Was he Japanese?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:35:06] Yeah, he's, he was Japanese, but he was going around with this young Hispanic girl because in Los Angeles, where he lived, was lot of Hispanic, but he was a dodo anyway. But he said, "You thought I liked fishing." And I said, "Yeah." And I thought, "What the heck is he talking about?" He said, "Well, you went and got me a pole and a new reel and stuff." And he said, "I didn't like fishing. I just used that as an excuse," because he had a Caucasian girlfriend. Oh. So. And then when he said that, you know, I got mad and I put my fists together and I hit him in the back. So then he grabbed me and, um, my, it was a bowling night. We bowled. And so, uh, his friend and my friend, he said, "I'll never mess around with you, Alice. I saw Jim, his body was all scratched. I had noticed him."

Lata Murti: [00:36:12] Mmmmmm...

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:36:14] And he said, "I'm not going to get you mad." But he stayed mutual friends, but he just couldn't understand why Jim didn't see the girls.

Frances: [00:36:22]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:36:24] Not because he's Oriental. But there's that kind of Oriental too, that, very nonchalant. They don't care.

Speaker3: [00:36:32]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:36:35] I went like this. And hit him. You know and see I know I'm no pansy, I mean.

Lata Murti: [00:36:43] Mhm.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:36:43] I had three brothers that I messed and fought with.

Lata Murti: [00:36:48] Where? Where were you born? With the three brothers?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:36:52] Huh?

Lata Murti: [00:36:52] Were you the oldest of the four?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:36:55] No. I had three brothers. Um. And then I had a sister before me. Then me, and then my other younger sister. But my older sister that was older than me. She died. It was when they had, um, not diphtheria. But what? There was some kind of disease that was going around at that time in 1940, 40, 39.

Lata Murti: [00:37:21] And when were you born?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:37:22] 1936, in Guadalupe. Right on--it's not there, but. Yeah.

Lata Murti: [00:37:28] So. It was a Japanese American woman? It was a Japanese American woman who delivered you? Was a doctor?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:37:37] No. Well, most of them were strictly Japanese. They came from, a lot of them were were brought, and not war brides, but fixed marriages. See, like my dad was, was supposed to marry this girl, so he goes back to Japan. Well, she ran off with somebody else, and then she had a sister. And so they said, well, you marry him. So she didn't know him.

Speaker3: [00:38:12]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:38:13] They go on the ship and it's like, how many months in those days, you know? And she said, I cried, I cried, and she said, you know, because this is when we were more or less used to different things, phones and stuff. She said. I couldn't call anybody. We didn't have telephones and stuff. And she said, for 30 days I cried and I said, I said, did you make love? And she said, "Oh, yeah. But I gritted my teeth." And I know it was hard for her to tell me, but she was trying to tell me what experience she had. And then yet, you know, to the day they passed away, they were both very happy and see all of them were, were not war brides, but arranged to marry.

Frances: [00:39:08]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:39:12] Yeah. So she said, you know, when you have trouble, you call on the phone. She says, I didn't have nothing. But then after she got to California, then she made friends through the church. See, my dad was very devout Buddhist and my mom, because she was married to him.

Lata Murti: [00:39:36] Did your dad grow up here?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:39:38] Yeah, well, he came from Japan. See, his his dad was a teacher at the university. I forget which one in Japan. And he was a agriculture professor. So he had come. And then when my dad had his brother, my uncle, they came. And then they both didn't have wives. So, um, he, he went back and it's called waikashonein(?) Is mixed. Mixed marriage. Well, my mom said, "Oh my God, I didn't know him. And here I am on the ship with him." And I said, "Oh, so a lot of times when I think I'm in trouble or something, I think about those things. Then it's more, straightens me up. But I was pretty wild.

Lata Murti: [00:40:33] So you said you were named after.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:40:35] That doctor, a woman doctor.

Lata Murti: [00:40:37] So there's a Japanese American woman doctor here? In Guadalupe?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:40:42] Uh huh.

Lata Murti: [00:40:43] Wow. In the 1930s?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:40:45] Yeah, because I'm born 1936.

Lata Murti: [00:40:48] Yeah. So she was a doctor, not a midwife?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:40:51] Uh, no. No, she she was a doctor. Yeah.

Lata Murti: [00:40:55] Yeah. That's impressive.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:40:56] Because there was a lot of Japanese living here.

Lata Murti: [00:41:00] So you you grew up in Guadalupe?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:41:05] Yeah. Well, up to, uh, we went to camp.

Lata Murti: [00:41:09] Yeah.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:41:09] Then after we, we left camp because we, we stayed only four years. Then you were able to come back here or. But my folks um, there were three, two other families and they decided they wanted to stay together. So they followed the crop. That's. I don't know if you know where Oakley is. Antioch.

Lata Murti: [00:41:33] Uh huh.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:41:33] Pittsburgh. Well, that's, uh, Contra Costa County. Yeah.

Lata Murti: [00:41:39] So how old were you when you went to camp? How old were you when you went to camp?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:41:44] Six. Five.

Lata Murti: [00:41:46] 5 or 6?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:41:47] Yeah, because when I went to, when they made the building for school, I was six.

Lata Murti: [00:41:54] Okay. And that was the same time your dad went to North Dakota?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:41:59] Well, no. No, it was after. Because then he met us. We were we had to go to another camp before we went to Gila. Uh, in Tulare.

Lata Murti: [00:42:10] Mhm.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:42:10] So he met us there.

Lata Murti: [00:42:13] He met you in?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:42:14] In Tulare, but he had already been, he had already been in Bismarck two years before that. So he was taken first. Yeah.

[00:42:25]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:42:27] Well you know when I asked him, I said, "Were you mad?" And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Because you were taken and you didn't have any clothes, you know, you didn't know what to take." He said, "No," because it was something they had to do. And I don't know how true it is, but I guess there was some people that had guns along the coast here. That's why he thought that they were taken first. I don't know. That was his theory that because there was arms floating around.

Lata Murti: [00:43:06]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:43:06] So yeah. But see and then the thing is he said it had to be done, you know, and then they had the bombing of Pearl Harbor and all this stuff. So he, he was kind of not partial to Japanese or American. He just thought what was right and what he learned. So. No, he was he was, um, he was very understanding. Um, except when it came to me, when he found out I was Christian.

Lata Murti: [00:43:39] So how old were you when he went to North Dakota? Were you three? How old were you when he went to North Dakota.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:43:47] Five.

Lata Murti: [00:43:48] Oh, you were five. Okay

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:43:50] Yeah, because they came. And then shortly after that, after they took him, we were we had to go get ready to go to Tulare. We went to Tulare first.

Lata Murti: [00:44:02] Wait, so you were in Tulare for two years?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:44:05] Uh. Not quite. Yeah. It's just like a disembarking place. Yeah, for a short time.

Lata Murti: [00:44:13] So where did your father meet you again? In Tulare or Gila Bend?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:44:19] No. There was another place...Where'd they go after Tulare? There was another.

Speaker2: [00:44:25]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:44:27] But anyway, he met. He met up with us. What's that one by Santa Anita?

Speaker3: [00:44:35]

Speaker2: [00:44:37]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:44:41] Because we were there, most places were just short time. And then we made our trip. To what? I guess they weren't prepared because when we went to Arizona, it was a lot of trenches and. Huh, it was, it was in a mess. I mean, And then, uh, it was windy and cold. But I still remember

Lata Murti: [00:45:10] What was school like there?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:45:12] Huh?

Lata Murti: [00:45:13] What was school like for you?

Speaker2: [00:45:16]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:45:20] School. We, uh, six. When we were six, we went to first grade. They had teachers like Caucasian teachers. Yeah. So went to school until the

third, third year. Then we went with the group and two other families and followed the crop. See. But a lot of people came back to Guadalupe but my folks wanted to venture out. Yeah. But. Yeah. Now that you wanted me to talk. See, now I'm overdoing it.

Lata Murti: [00:46:00] No you're not.

Speaker2: [00:46:03]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:46:06] And I feel. I feel real blessed that I remember. You know, maybe dates and stuff [inaudible] but it's just, um, something. I mean, I'm not mad at it. I mean, and I could speak freely about how I felt, you know, and there was no animosity. Maybe I was a dumb girl.

Lata Murti: [00:46:33] You were very young.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:46:37] Yeah. We didn't have to work either when we were in camp. You wanted to play kick the can or something. You just call and say, "Hey, we're gonna play kick the can! Or hide and seek!" Or whatever, and there's a lot of kids, you know? So it was nice. And they had a big, um, place for washing clothes and then the mess hall, and then they ring the bell, breakfast, noon, and, and my mom and dad were cooks and my, my brother, the second brother, he was, I don't know how old he was, but anyway, he dishwash, I mean, and I said, how much you get paid? And he said, \$0.05 an hour.

Lata Murti: [00:47:25] Wow.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:47:25] Well, yeah. Well see. Yeah. You didn't have no need for money.

Lata Murti: [00:47:29] Yeah.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:47:30] So it was like found money or.

Lata Murti: [00:47:33] What did you think of the food?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:47:35] Huh?

Lata Murti: [00:47:35] What did you think of the food?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:47:37] It wasn't bad. But first, they gave us all a watermelon. But I love watermelon, though. And they have menus, you know, because there's how many blocks. I mean, I wish I had a picture of the camp because there's so many barracks

Speaker3: [00:47:56]

Speaker2: [00:47:56] Yeah.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:48:01] Now, you had your interview.

Lata Murti: [00:48:03] Not all of it. Um, so you were talking about Christmas. You were talking about Christmas at the camps?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:48:15] Yeah, we had a big tree. They had tree. They had tree in the mess hall. They gave us gifts. And they had a nice feast, you know.

Lata Murti: [00:48:27] Do you remember any of the gifts you got?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:48:29] No

Lata Murti: [00:48:30] No.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:48:31] I don't think it amounted to too much. You know, because they didn't have no money. Yeah. But then, um, that store, everything was cheap. Penny. Nickel.

Lata Murti: [00:48:47] What was the store called? What was the store called?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:48:51] I don't know, I just they're a barrack, huh?

Tomiko: [00:48:55]

Lata Murti: [00:49:12]

Tomiko: [00:49:18]

Lata Murti: [00:49:21]

Tomiko: [00:49:22]

Lata Murti: [00:49:24]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:49:25] It was mostly Guadalupean. We were mostly Guadalupean. Yeah, you see a lot of the other blocks were kind of mixed, but our block was basically Guadalupean.

Lata Murti: [00:49:47] So when did you start going to the Christian church?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:49:52] When I was in high school.

Lata Murti: [00:49:53] When you were in high school.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:49:55] I was going to Santa Maria high. Um hum. And, uh. And then next thing.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:49:59] I had no way of coming to Guadalupe. So we didn't drive. You know, I was too young. All my friends were. Minister used to come after us, so I went to Christ Methodist. I even became baptized on Easter Day. The Easter sunrise. Mm.

Speaker2: [00:50:18]

Lata Murti: [00:50:19] So you were living in Santa Maria, then?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:50:22] Well. The, she furnished the home for you. Plus you had three, four acres of shrubbery, and then you took care of that patch. So they that's how how they went for a couple of years. Well, more than couple spent a lot.

Lata Murti: [00:50:43] Your family?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:50:44] Yeah. And then, uh, the parents started to get old, and then the kids. Really, you know.

Speaker3: [00:50:53]

Speaker1: [00:50:54] And a lot of them didn't want to pick berries, strawberries. But to me, it was really nice. I know, because I. I'm a competitive person. I wanted to beat my brother. My second, uh, the youngest brother. Whatever he did, I wanted to do. And I did pretty good.

Frances: [00:51:19]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:51:22] Sumi lived in Guadalupe. And I didn't know her when we were growing up. Till after she went and became a nurse. Went to college. Then she came back home. Came back here because she got married, divorced. She had two boys and then got divorced too. So yeah. So that's when we kind of got together because the folks were always friends.

Frances: [00:51:47]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:51:48] Yeah. See? But I didn't know her. I didn't know her till later.

Speaker2: [00:51:53]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:51:56]

Frances: [00:52:00]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:52:00] See, Kon(?), my husband was born in Grisby. That was before Santa Maria hospital was built. Okay.

Lata Murti: [00:52:12] So your second husband is also Japanese?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:52:16] Uh huh.

Lata Murti: [00:52:17] They both grew up in the US?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:52:20] Yeah. Yeah. His his father was, um. Well, he had workers, and he would shuck them to different spots. So he he lived. He would have a house over here is still up, but I don't know who owns it now.

Speaker3: [00:52:39]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:52:41] You see, I didn't I didn't know, uh, him until we went to high school because he went to Guadalupe, you know, school. And then I went to Santa Maria. Um, Rice. Rice school. Mhm. Yeah.

Speaker3: [00:52:59]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:53:02] Then we ended up.

Speaker2: [00:53:03]

Speaker3: [00:53:06]

Speaker2: [00:53:06]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:53:07] But the funny part of that is we were good friends but we were, um, platonic I mean you know and then I worked in motor vehicles. He came one day, and he said--.

Lata Murti: [00:53:18] He worked in motor vehicles here too?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:53:22]

Lata Murti: [00:53:22] In Santa Maria?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:53:23] Yeah. So he came and he said, I've got tickets for our reunion because same age, same time. And I said, "I don't want to go to no reunion." And he said, "Why not?" I said, "I see everybody once in four years" at that time, you know. I said, "Why do I have to go to a reunion, get dressed up and all that?" And he said, "Come on, I bought the dinner tickets already." So I went the first year, for, it was the 10th year. And the 15th. He comes back to motor vehicles. I got tickets, so we're going to go. I said, "I don't want to go."

Speaker3: [00:54:01]

Speaker2: [00:54:02]

Speaker3: [00:54:02]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:54:05] I love to dance. I love to jitterbug and stuff. And none of the guys here dance, or. They were a bunch of. And so we went and then we had our dinner and he said, come on, let's dance. I said, "But that's jitterbug." He said, "Yeah. So?" I says, "Oh, okay," so we get out there, then he's twirling me around. And I said, "Oh my golly, he changed," and I see.

Lata Murti: [00:54:36] He can dance!

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:54:37] Yeah. Then we ended up getting married, but we liked each other as friends. Because, see, why, he was born in January. I was born in May, but we were the same age. Well, I got home and I was like this. And he was quiet.

Lata Murti: [00:54:59] What was high school like for you?

Lata Murti: [00:55:02] It was nice. It was, um, it was a mixture, you know. And so, um.

Frances: [00:55:09]

Frances: [00:55:12]

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:55:14] Okay. Yeah, yeah. So, um, it it varied. I mean, we all got there. The boys would have a dance session, but they wait until the 11:00. Then they start asking you when you got to go home, you know. So that's how the guys were. They were very backwards. So they're shy, huh? You're a shy. But, uh, you somehow.

Lata Murti: [00:55:54] So. So let me make sure I have the timeline right. I want to make sure I have the timeline right for what you shared with me. So you were born in Guadalupe in 1936.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:56:06] Six

Lata Murti: [00:56:08] 1936. And you went to camp when you were five and your father was sent to Bismarck the same time. Uh huh. And how long were you separated?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:56:20] A couple of years.

Lata Murti: [00:56:21] Two years? Um, so. So you were seven when you saw him?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:56:28] No. When we got to. When we got to Gila Bend, I was first grade. I was six years old. But we some of the stops, the two stops, we were just short duration. Okay. Yeah. Not even a year or half a year.

Lata Murti: [00:56:45] But your dad was not with you.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:56:47] No.

Lata Murti: [00:56:47] No, he didn't see you again until. Well.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:56:51] He came to the end of the last one that we, before we went into Gila Bend.

Lata Murti: [00:56:57] Oh, at Santa Anita. Okay. So you didn't see him when you were five and you didn't see him for most of when you were six?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:57:06] No, six. We I did, because that's when we were in Gila Bend. But but the time was so vast. Yeah, we we got settled and then we had to move, you know. So time element is kind of difficult. Yeah. Yeah. I have to remember I started kindergarten at, uh, in camp.

Lata Murti: [00:57:33] So do you still keep in touch with anyone else from camp?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:57:41] One of the teachers, um. Mrs. Naygridge(?) She she came.

Lata Murti: [00:57:49] Say that again. One of the kids.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:57:51] One of the teachers.

Lata Murti: [00:57:52] Teachers?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:57:53] Yeah. And I didn't have her, but she came to the camp and her name was Mrs. Naygridge(?). And, uh, there's a lot of kids that remember her because she taught kindergarten and first grade. So they had more teachers. See, like me, I only had her because then we had to come to camp.

Lata Murti: [00:58:19] Now, some, um, some people I've interviewed told me that they got to take piano lessons or tap lessons at camp.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:58:28] Yeah.

Lata Murti: [00:58:29] There.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:58:30] Yeah. Some individuals, you know, um. Oh, we had a regular high school because I brought the yearbook that my brother, oldest brother Greg, I'll bring it to you. It's all torn. It's all. It was 1945 when he graduated.

Lata Murti: [00:58:48] And were you separated, girls and boys? Or, no, you were all together in school? Um. But the families were separated?

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:58:57] No. The families eventually. No, they were together.

Lata Murti: [00:59:01] Well, one family per.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:59:03] Well, yeah.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:59:08] So, see, there were different camps. There were nine different camps. One of them was in Idaho, in Seabrook. Yeah. So.

Lata Murti: [00:59:19] Arkansas.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:59:20] And Poston. Poston had three different camps.

Lata Murti: [00:59:25] So when you left camp, your family went to Contra Costa.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:59:32] Yeah. Yeah.

Lata Murti: [00:59:32] And then you followed the crop.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:59:35] When my father came home, before, he came back, way before he. When we were in Gila.

Lata Murti: [00:59:43] Okay.

Alice Utsunomiya: [00:59:44] It was the last place, um, that we were traveling. Then when we got to Gila. That was the last, and he was already with us.

Lata Murti: [00:59:56] Okay. And so when you and your siblings and your mother left, you met him in Contra Costa.

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:00:05] Yeah.

Lata Murti: [01:00:05] And then you followed the crop. So when did you come back here to?

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:00:10] Um. I think it was 1947, 47, 47 because I was in the, um. Seventh grade. I have to figure that out.

Lata Murti: [01:00:24] That's okay.

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:00:24] But I went to Bonita School.

Lata Murti: [01:00:26] Okay.

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:00:28] It's a one building school. Now it's big. Uh huh. So a lot of the schooling was one building. For. All age classes.

Lata Murti: [01:00:40] And then. And how old were you when you went to Los Angeles?

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:00:48] I went to Los Angeles.

Lata Murti: [01:00:50] After high school.

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:00:51] Yeah. After high school? 55.

Lata Murti: [01:00:54] Okay. So 19?

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:00:56] Yeah. 1955 I worked one year at an insurance company, and then I went to take the test. I told you. Yeah.

Lata Murti: [01:01:05] Did you. Did you go to a Buddhist temple at all in Los Angeles? When you were there?

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:01:12] No.

Lata Murti: [01:01:13] No. Too busy?...Yeah.

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:01:17] Yeah. Yeah.

Tomiko: [01:01:22]

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:01:24] Yeah.

Lata Murti: [01:01:26] Well. Thank you. We'll talk more next time. We'll talk more.

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:01:29] At least we hooked up.

Lata Murti: [01:01:31] Yeah. Thank you.

Alice Utsunomiya: [01:01:34] Don't worry.