# Nishihara Murti 11-30-21.m4a

**Lata Murti:** [00:04:48] Can you tell me about, your childhood? And what you remember from your childhood?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:05:30] I, I don't really remember very much about it, you know, it was, but you know, my childhood was happy.

**Lata Murti:** [00:05:39] Where did you grow up?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:05:41] I was born in Santa Barbara and then we went to the relocation center in Arizona and we came back in ‘45 and I was seven then so, and then I went to school in Santa Barbara. Grammar school, Junior High school and the University of California. And I have a degree in mathematics.

**Lata Murti:** [00:06:07] Okay. So what was your family?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Pardon me.

**Lata Murti:** Can you tell me about your family growing up?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:06:25] My father was born in California, but he was raised in Japan. And then my mother was born in Santa Barbara. And so. So we're basically a California family. My father worked as a farmer and a cabinetmaker. So and we just had a normal, upbringing.

**Lata Murti:** [00:06:56] And siblings?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:06:57] Oh, I have well, I have one. One sister died, but I have an older sister in Santa Barbara and then another sister in Santa Barbara. And my brother lives in Fremont, California.

**Lata Murti:** [00:07:16] Oh, okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:07:18] And he's, he was a policeman there for before he retired as a policeman, but and he's in real estate.

**Lata Murti:** [00:07:24] So you're in the middle?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:07:27] I was the second child.

**Lata Murti:** [00:07:27] Second. The second. Okay. The second out of. Three or four—

**Valentine Nishihara:** Pardon me?

**Lata Murti:** The second of how many kids?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Five.

**Lata Murti:** Okay. Yeah. All right. And so you're very much a California family. So how old were you when your family went to the internment camps?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:07:51] See, I was born in ‘38, and I'm not sure exactly what year we were shipped over there, but I know when we came back I was seven because that was in 45.

**Lata Murti:** [00:08:05] When you came back, you were seven, so it's probably hard for you to remember.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:08:11] Yes, it's just, you know, a normal childhood. You just have fun when you're young.

**Lata Murti:** [00:08:16] Mm hmm. So do you remember anything about the camps?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:08:22] I know that we lived in a part of a barracks, and the, the bathroom was in the middle of the--and, you know, you had your own mess hall. But when you're young, you know, life is very, pleasant.

**Lata Murti:** [00:08:44] Mm hmm. And this was all in Gila River?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yes.

**Lata Murti:** Mm hmm. Are there any people you remember from that time?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:08:55] No. No, not when you're that young.

**Lata Murti:** [00:08:57] Yeah.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:08:58] My. My parents or my father would have known a lot of people at the reunion, but I. And he died years ago.

**Lata Murti:** [00:09:10] Tell me about the reunion.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:09:15] It was, I think, at the Fremont Hotel. And it was just. Just a gathering. And, you know, and a lot of people had known each other in Arizona, so. And they did a good job with the, the book.

**Lata Murti:** [00:09:34] Mm hmm. Can I take a look at it again?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Sure.

**Lata Murti:** I think it's this one, Right?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Oops.

**Lata Murti:** Yeah. So this was--

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:09:46] And I earmarked the pictures of my family in there.

**Lata Murti:** [00:09:51] Right.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:09:54] But they went to the trouble of, you know, doing everybody's photograph

**Lata Murti:** [00:10:02] Yeah. So how many people were there?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:10:07] Oh, gosh, I don't know.

**Lata Murti:** [00:10:09] Yeah. Was it most of the people who were in the camps? Did most everyone go to the reunion?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:10:18] The Gila, the Gila River camp.

**Lata Murti:** [00:10:21] So most people came….And this was the one and only reunion they ever had?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:10:31] I don't know, I think so. My father—

**Lata Murti:** [00:10:34] Oh, the 50th anniversary of the closing. I'm sorry. Go on. You think it was the only one they had?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:10:44] I think so.

**Lata Murti:** [00:10:44] Okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:10:47] It was the only one I ever went to.

**Lata Murti:** [00:10:54] So what else do you remember from the reunion? It was at the Fremont Hotel. And they took everybody's picture.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:11:04] Yes, because I didn't realize they had until I saw my picture in there. But they did a good job.

**Lata Murti:** [00:11:13] Mm hmm. So do you remember any stories from the reunion?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:11:23] No, not really, no. When you're a kid. You're just kids.

**Lata Murti:** [00:11:28] Yeah. Yeah. So what was life like for your family after the camp?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:11:34] Well, when we came back to Santa Barbara, the house was a mess because somebody had torn it up and, you know, like the plumbing was missing and, you know, that type of thing. So it wasn't really too livable at, at the beginning.

**Lata Murti:** [00:11:53] Mm hmm.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:11:54] But we all got settled in.

**Lata Murti:** [00:12:01] Does your family still have that house?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Pardon me?

**Lata Murti:** Does your family still have that house? Is it in the family still?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:12:08] No, that was sold. Actually, right now there's a historic structure on it, although it's not really historic, you know, as part of this Santa Barbara history.

**Lata Murti:** [00:12:22] Oh, wow. Okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:12:25] So it's now a historical building site.

**Lata Murti:** [00:12:29] Oh, really? Oh, where is that?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:12:33] Cañon Perdido.

**Lata Murti:** [00:12:34] Oh, okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:12:37] 129 Cañon Perdido was the address.

**Lata Murti:** [00:12:40] And what made it a historical site?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:12:44] Yeah, so. So it's right in the middle of town.

**Lata Murti:** [00:12:48] So, what's historic about that site?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Pardon me?

**Lata Murti:** What is historic about that site?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:12:57] It was some sort of. I think they, I don't know exactly what they have there, but it was some sort of. Like almost a military structure. Part of the historic Santa Barbara, is one of the first some sort of building or another. And it is marked as a historical site.

**Lata Murti:** [00:13:24] So tell me how you got into the Navy?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:13:28] Oh, I was, when I graduated high school, I think they contacted people in high school and said, you know, would you like to join the reserves? It's drilling one weekend a month and you have to go on duty for two weeks a year and you get paid for it. So that sounded interesting. So I joined.

**Lata Murti:** [00:13:59] So you were 18?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yes, 18.

**Lata Murti:** And you had graduated from which high school?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:14:08] Santa Barbara High.

**Lata Murti:** [00:14:09] Santa Barbara High. And so you went into the reserves. And how long did you stay?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:14:17] I retired, I think, in ‘91.

**Lata Murti:** [00:14:20] Oh, okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** That's when my husband joined. Oh, I think, yeah. Around then.

**Lata Murti:** So you were in for a long time. Is that where you met your husband?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:14:36] No, I actually met my husband in Orlando, Florida. I was the CEO of a reserve unit there and he joined the unit and that's how we met. We hit it off and we've been married about 31 years now.

**Lata Murti:** [00:15:00] 31 years. So what brought you---

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:15:03] And I didn't get married till I was 51.

**Lata Murti:** [00:15:07] Oh, okay. So was that unusual for your, among your friends and your family? Was that unusual?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:15:19] Probably because they probably thought I would never get married.

**Lata Murti:** [00:15:24] Did you think you would never get married?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:15:26] Oh, I didn't really worry about it or think about it. I was enjoying life.

**Lata Murti:** [00:15:34] So you were. You were in the Navy all that time?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:15:38] I was in the reserves.

**Lata Murti:** [00:15:39] The reserves.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:15:39] I was on active duty for three and a half years.

**Lata Murti:** [00:15:42] Three and a half years. Okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:15:44] And I was at the Fleet Computer Programming Center, programming.

**Lata Murti:** [00:15:48] And what were you doing after that?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:15:52] I was a computer programmer, so I just worked for Grumman and GE. Well, I worked for GE first before we even went on active duty. And then I worked for the state of Hawaii there at various companies.

**Lata Murti:** [00:16:14] So you moved a lot?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:16:17] Yes. In fact, when I was with Grumman, I worked and I lived in Iran.

**Lata Murti:** [00:16:23] Oh, wow. How long were you in Iran?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:16:26] I think three and a half years.

**Lata Murti:** [00:16:29] Three and a half years. What was it like to be a Japanese American woman in Iran?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:16:38] Oh.

**Lata Murti:** [00:16:41] How did people respond to you there?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:16:43] Yeah, well, I enjoy life wherever I am.

**Lata Murti:** [00:16:51] I'm just curious. So what brought you to Lompoc?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:16:59] Well, I went to Hawaii and I stayed there another 20 years and then I decided to move back to California. And Santa Barbara was much too expensive. It was much cheaper to live and to work in Lompoc. And since I didn't have to worry about commuting, that was very nice. Lompoc is a very nice place.

**Lata Murti:** [00:17:24] Mm hmm. It is, so, how would you compare Lompoc to Hawaii? I didn't realize you lived in Hawaii for 20 years.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:17:37] I think California has the best weather. You know, it's very pleasant in Hawaii, and it's simple. People think it's kind of perfect. But I really like California. And you can hop in your car and go anywhere.

**Lata Murti:** [00:17:54] So what were you doing in Hawaii and then what did you do in Lompoc after that?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:18:01] Oh, I was a programmer analyst in Hawaii. I worked for the state of Hawaii and for a bank. I retired when we came back here. So since I retired, we didn't have to worry about commuting or anything like that.

**Lata Murti:** [00:18:24] What was your husband doing in Hawaii?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Pardon me.

**Lata Murti:** Was your husband with you in--

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:18:31] Not all the time. He had some things he had to take care of on the mainland, and he did. But we came back together here.

**Lata Murti:** [00:18:43] Do you have any children?

**Valentine Nishihara:** No.

**Lata Murti:** No. Okay. So let me ask you more about your life and your experiences here in Lompoc. So how familiar were you with Lompoc before you moved here? Had you come here a lot before when you were growing up? In Santa Barbara?

**Valentine Nishihara:** No.

**Lata Murti:** So what were your first impressions of Lompoc?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:19:14] Well, it was much cheaper here. And it was very quiet and there was no traffic. And that's still the case.

**Lata Murti:** [00:19:22] True. Do you still live in the same place?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:19:25] Yes. We bought the house in 2003, we've been living in the same house.

**Lata Murti:** [00:19:33] Well, what changes have you seen since then?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:19:36] Oh, it's grown up, but not as grown up as Santa Barbara really grew.

**Lata Murti:** [00:19:42] Mm hmm.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:19:43] And there's still very little traffic here.

**Lata Murti:** [00:19:48] That's true. Yeah. And any other first impressions you had of Lompoc? It was less expensive. It was quieter.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:20:01] No, it's just, it's really convenient If we want to eat, go somewhere special. We will probably go to Santa Barbara.

**Lata Murti:** [00:20:10] Yeah. Is there a Japanese-American community here in Lompoc?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:20:20] I. I don't think so.

**Lata Murti:** [00:20:23] Where's the rest of your family now? Like your siblings?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:20:28] My brother is in Fremont and I have two sisters in Santa Barbara.

**Lata Murti:** [00:20:33] Oh, okay. So do you get to see them often?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:20:38] No, I don't see them too much. Just.

**Lata Murti:** [00:20:44] You like to stay here in Lompoc.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:20:47] But we travel quite a bit. We, well, we like Las Vegas a lot. Or I do. I'm not sure if my husband likes it that much.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:20:56] And even after the flag signing, we went to Lompoc. I mean, to Las Vegas, for a week right after that. And we like Avila Beach because it's close and it's on the beach. And then we like Palm Springs and San Francisco.

**Lata Murti:** [00:21:20] What do you like about each of those places? What do you really like about Vegas?

**Valentine Nishihara:** About what?

**Lata Murti:** About Vegas? Las Vegas.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:21:27] Oh, I play penny. Penny slots.

**Lata Murti:** [00:21:29] Oh, you play penny slots. When did you first start doing that?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:21:36] Well, I've never gambled very much, and I like to just gamble a little bit because you can't lose much when you don't bet much.

**Lata Murti:** [00:21:47] Do you usually drive there?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yes.

**Lata Murti:** Yes.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:21:52] But we pick the right time to go and we can normally make it almost all the way on cruise control, which is very difficult if you do it at the wrong traffic hours, because you could get really bogged down on 15 or just traveling and to be on cruise control for most of the way on Highway 15 or US 15 is very good.

**Lata Murti:** [00:22:20] Yeah.

**Lata Murti:** So—

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:22:20] The only thing now is gas. It’s getting to be more of a burden.

**Lata Murti:** [00:22:28] Yes, it is. And so you like the beaches And what do you like about San Francisco?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:22:38] Oh, well, San Francisco's changed a lot. It. It's getting dirty and it used to be a really pleasant place and, you know, friendly, but now it's you have to watch things, you know. Crime is up and streets are dirty. It just. But it's still a nice town.

**Lata Murti:** [00:23:03] Mm hmm. So are you part of any clubs or groups or organizations here in Lompoc?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:23:13] Well, we're members of the Elks and the American Legion here, and we really like the American Legion. That's very nice to have. They were very friendly there, and everybody knows each other.

**Lata Murti:** [00:23:31] Tell me more about the American Legion. I'm not very familiar with it. Can you tell me more about the American Legion?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:23:38] They normally have one in every town, and there's normally always a bar associated with it. And the one here isn't open all the time. It's open but closed on Tuesdays and they don't open till 3:00 during the week and then they close at about eight. And then on weekends they don't open till noon and they close about six except for Friday and Saturday. Those are late nights. They have things going on like karaoke on Friday night and just kind of partying on Saturday night. And drinks are very reasonable.

**Lata Murti:** [00:24:21] So who can become a member?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:24:25] Veterans.

**Lata Murti:** [00:24:26] Veterans.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:24:26] And my husband is a veteran, too, so. But you should look into it where you live. Do you live in Santa Maria?

**Lata Murti:** [00:24:35] In Orcutt.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:24:37] that's. I'm sure they have at least one there. Like in Las Vegas, they have five American Legions.

**Lata Murti:** [00:24:51] Oh, wow.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:24:53] And then the one we found was about three miles from where we were staying. And they were open from 11 in the morning to 11 at night, seven days a week. And they had the most delicious sandwiches there at the bar.

**Lata Murti:** [00:25:09] That's good to know. Yeah, I think I want to go to Vegas some time just to eat. I keep hearing about the food. So are there a lot of women in the American Legion here in Lompoc, or is it mostly men?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:25:26] They have an auxiliary, which are the spouses. Basically, because most of the members are men and there are a few women. But even when I was on active duty at the Fleet Computer Programming Center, I was the only woman in the command, officer, and we had no enlisted women.

**Lata Murti:** [00:25:47] So. So what was that like to be the only woman?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:25:52] Oh, I was just one of the guys.

**Lata Murti:** [00:25:55] Yeah. So you never felt any differences with them or anything. Did you have any challenge?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:26:05] Except one of the enlisted men told me, he said, it's a good thing you came. He said the language was getting to be really bad around here, and I never heard any bad language.

**Lata Murti:** [00:26:20] So. And, you know, if you're not comfortable answering this question or you don't have an answer, that's fine. But I think. You know, after, I know you were little then, but after what your family went through with the camps and everything, um. Did you ever feel anything negative towards the US military when you were serving in it?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Oh no!

**Lata Murti:** No? You never did?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:26:54] I enjoyed my life in the Navy.

**Lata Murti:** [00:26:58] What did you really enjoy about it?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:27:03] I enjoyed the work. That was one thing. And then I always liked the people I worked with.

**Lata Murti:** [00:27:11] Good.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:27:12] And then I got to travel a lot. I would fly, space available, when I could, and I had pilot friends who told me that I flew more space than they did.

**Lata Murti:** [00:27:26] Oh, wow. Do you miss it? Do you miss being in the reserves?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:27:35] No, that was just a different life, that's all.

**Lata Murti:** [00:27:40] And. So how did the pandemic, how has the pandemic affected your life at all?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:27:48] Not too much. My husband and I both have had our booster shots. And we wear our masks. And I think we're pretty safe.

**Lata Murti:** [00:28:03] Good. So your life didn't change much because--

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:28:06] No, we don't travel as much as we used to. That's, that's about it. But you can still hop in your car and just drive a little bit.

**Lata Murti:** [00:28:16] So you said you and your husband both are in the American Legion?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:28:21] And he's, that picture. He was a commander, and, which is three stripes, and minus four stripes, which is captain. And since then, he's made captain, so.

**Lata Murti:** [00:28:35] Oh, okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:28:38] He's ten years younger than I am.

**Lata Murti:** [00:28:41] Okay. And you said you met in Florida.

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yes.

**Lata Murti:** And so you're part of the American Legion and the Elks?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yes.

**Lata Murti:** Any other groups?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:29:02] No, not really, no.

**Lata Murti:** [00:29:04] And so most of your friends are in those groups.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:29:09] More of the American Legion, I think, and just people that we've known for a long time.

**Lata Murti:** [00:29:14] And so how did the pandemic affect the American Legion? Were they able to have as many events or?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:29:25] Oh, I don't know, because I think we joined in while they were in the middle of the pandemic.

**Lata Murti:** [00:29:33] Okay. So you joined recently?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:29:35] Well, no, it's been about a year now. But what happened was Lloyd had a partial knee replacement and, and I was told, oh, the American Legion, you can get wheelchairs or walkers or that type of thing. So I went over to check it out and found out they, were where they were and that they had this bar and you could join and I could join. So I said, Oh, okay.

**Lata Murti:** [00:30:04] So are most of them veterans of certain wars in the Legion?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:30:10] A range.

**Lata Murti:** [00:30:11] A range.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:30:12] And you just have to be a veteran.

**Lata Murti:** [00:30:13] Veteran. Okay. So do you have a lot of younger people?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:30:17] I don't--every once in a while I'll see younger people, but normally they're older.

**Lata Murti:** [00:30:23] Would you like more younger people to join? Do you think?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:30:29] I think they, they would recruit them if they could.

**Lata Murti:** [00:30:32] Okay. So what's stopping them? Why do you think they can't?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:30:39] Well, I'm not sure there are that many around.

**Lata Murti:** [00:30:42] Oh, okay. Yeah. In this area?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yeah.

**Lata Murti:** Or, okay. So do you have any connection or relationship to, to Vandenberg?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:30:55] Here? No, other than using the commissary things like that, you know?

**Lata Murti:** [00:31:04] Okay. Younger generations in the military, or may be thinking about going into the military, what would you like them to know?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:31:21] It's a different way of life that, you know, it's kind of an experience. That's interesting.

**Lata Murti:** [00:31:31] And anything else?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:31:34] And you should try. They should try it. They could.

**Lata Murti:** [00:31:43] All right. What would you like younger people to know about you or in your own life. Any lessons you think they can take away from your experiences?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:32:01] No, it's just something that I have enjoyed and that was different. So I got to. Travel a lot.

**Lata Murti:** [00:32:13] Yeah. So what are all the places you've traveled then? So you've been to Iran? Hawaii. Where else?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:32:25] Oh, I went to Europe about three times. Just on vacation, just traveling.

**Lata Murti:** [00:32:33] Okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:32:34] And I've been around a lot of places in the US. I've lived on the East coast in Florida and Virginia and on the West Coast. I prefer it on the West Coast.

**Lata Murti:** [00:32:46] But is this your favorite place? You think?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:32:48] Well, Florida. It gets very humid there and the heat and the humidity are about the same in the summer. If it's going to be 90 degrees, it's 90% humidity. And that's very uncomfortable. Or 95. And here it's very comfortable all year round.

**Lata Murti:** [00:33:10] And it's humid in Hawaii, too.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:33:13] Not as bad.

**Lata Murti:** [00:33:14] Yeah.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:33:15] Yeah.

**Lata Murti:** [00:33:16] So do you have a favorite place?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:33:20] Mm. No.

**Lata Murti:** [00:33:20] No.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:33:22] I think, I think I could enjoy any place I happen to be.

**Lata Murti:** [00:33:30] That's great. Any place that you thought was the worst place. Or that you didn't enjoy besides the humidity in Florida? No.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:33:42] No, well, that, you know, there are certain things you can just live with. You know, you just get inside your air conditioning or something like that. Even in Las Vegas, it gets very hot there. But you just go from your air conditioned car to your air conditioned building

**Lata Murti:** [00:34:02] So what helped you through? I'm guessing there were some challenging times when you were in the military or challenging experiences in life overall, and when you faced those, how have you gotten through them? What has helped you?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:34:25] I don't know. I've always had a very good life and, you know, things go my way.

**Lata Murti:** [00:34:32] Well, that's good, you know. Why do you think that is? Things go your way.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:34:37] Partly my attitude.

**Lata Murti:** [00:34:38] Your attitude. You have a very positive attitude. Great. Um. So I have to admit, before I saw the ad for my job here, I didn't know anything about the Central Coast. And so, what, what would you like people to know about the Central Coast? Especially younger people? Because a lot of younger professionals, they don't stay here. I've found. Have you found that to be the case?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:35:15] If they don't, I think they'll be back.

**Lata Murti:** [00:35:18] You think they'll be back? Did you ever think you would come back to Santa Barbara County?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:35:27] Hmm. Well, home has normally been where your family was. And family was in California, so. And now home is where I am.

**Lata Murti:** [00:35:39] So you thought you might come back?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:35:43] And California is the best place.

**Lata Murti:** [00:35:48] Yeah. No, I really enjoy living here.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:35:53] Oh, do you have a calling card?

**Lata Murti:** [00:35:55] I do. It's some.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:36:02] So I'll put it with my, the other calling call card from.

**Lata Murti:** [00:38:14] Oh, so you were already a college freshman at UCSB when you joined.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:38:21] I might have been. I thought it was between the high school and college, but it might have been. It was, I guess, after I started college.

**Lata Murti:** [00:38:43] So I think this is interesting. You said that. When I went into the service, it was not considered the proper thing for women and the military was not a field you went into, especially if you were from a conservative family. So was your family. Conservative, you think?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:39:13] No, I think they were very good. They always trusted my judgment on what I did. So they, you know, I didn't get a hard time from my family.

**Lata Murti:** [00:39:24] Well, that's good. What were you studying at UC Santa Barbara?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:39:28] Mathematics.

**Lata Murti:** [00:39:29] Oh, that's right. You were studying mathematics. Let's see, you say here. Although her parents were not overjoyed when she joined the Navy, they did not oppose her decision and they did not oppose her decision to apply for a commission after she graduated from college. That's the part you told me about language, that the language improved around you in the, in the Navy, in the Reserves. I was told a couple of times the language was getting pretty bad around here.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:40:41] What was kind of neat was even when I was an ensign, I had admirals who would hold the door for me because they were always gentleman.

**Lata Murti:** [00:40:54] Oh, and you've been a real estate investor, too?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:41:21] Yes. At one time I think I had ten, ten houses and I sold the last one last year. I got rid of that house in Florida.

**Lata Murti:** [00:41:31] Oh, okay. So how did you find the house that you live in now here?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:41:37] I was looking for VA assumptions and, you know, found them when the interest rates were low at that time. The only time the interest rates were really high was about ’80, 1981, when they just really jumped.

**Lata Murti:** [00:41:57] So is there anything for you from your Japanese heritage or culture that your family kept practicing or kept alive or you did in your own life?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:42:11] No.

**Lata Murti:** [00:42:12] No. Have you ever visited Japan?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:42:15] I went to Japan once and it was just a tourist trip. And because I didn't really visit anybody, I knew.

**Lata Murti:** [00:42:24] Okay, What was that experience like?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:42:30] Well, Japan is basically very clean, which is, you know, very nice, and people are very friendly and helpful, and it's always an enjoyable experience.

**Lata Murti:** [00:42:45] So someone else I interviewed said it was strange for them a bit because people would look at her and assume that she speaks Japanese because she looks like everybody else. But of course she didn't. So did that happen to you, too?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:43:02] No. I was almost going to say, give a Chinese name.

**Lata Murti:** [00:43:08] Okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:43:09] So that they wouldn't expect me to really speak Japanese or, you know, do the normal Japanese things.

**Lata Murti:** [00:43:20] Did you go by yourself?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Oh, yes.

**Lata Murti:** You went by yourself. So most of your traveling has been on your own?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yeah.

**Lata Murti:** Oh, do you still go to auctions and flea markets?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:43:44] When I can? Yes.

**Lata Murti:** [00:43:59] So this article says, in keeping with the Oriental fondness for space and openness Nishihara keeps table surfaces bare. Is that why you do that? Do you feel like it's cultural or--

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:44:15] No, I don't even remember that.

**Lata Murti:** [00:44:18] I saw that. I can show it to you.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:44:25] I don't know. What? Maybe. Maybe whoever was interviewing me, reviewing me, saw a bare table or something.

**Lata Murti:** [00:44:36] Yeah, that's why I asked. I wondered if you had said that or the.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:44:40] Because I, I clutter.

**Lata Murti:** [00:44:40] I clutter too.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:44:45] Oh, but anyhow, I thought I'd bring this little article.

**Lata Murti:** [00:44:49] No, I'm glad you did. Thank you. Actually, if I can, I think I would like to make a copy of that. That one, a photocopy if they have a machine here. Oh, before we go, I was going to ask you. Oh, how did you find out about the flag signing?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:45:07] About the what?

**Lata Murti:** [00:45:08] The flag signing.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:45:10] Oh, my husband keeps up with things like that and he told me about it and I said, Oh, let's go.

**Lata Murti:** [00:45:17] Oh, good.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:45:19] And, and I was glad that we went and my sister was going to go, but she didn't go. And I said, well, they had something in, I think, Carpenteria or someplace. She lives in Montecito. And I said, you know, why don't you just go there? And she didn't do that. So, I, so, when we went to Santa Maria, I signed her name. Oh, not signed it. I wrote her name down.

**Lata Murti:** [00:45:45] Are you and your sister really different?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:45:48] Um. I think so. You know, I'm the only one that went anywhere. She stayed in Santa Barbara, and, well, the sister that lived in Hawaii was the only other one that, and then my, my brother in Fremont. But other than that, everybody kind of just stayed in Santa Barbara.

**Lata Murti:** [00:46:10] So do you, or did you know Margaret Cooper, who did the flag signing? Do you know her at all?

**Valentine Nishihara:** No.

**Lata Murti:** No, you don't. Okay. Did you meet her that day at the flag signing?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:46:22] I'm not sure.

**Lata Murti:** [00:46:23] Oh, she's the one who organized. Oh, all of it. Yeah, but you met the judge.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:46:31] Yes. Yeah, he gave me his calling card. That's why I know I met him.

**Lata Murti:** [00:46:34] Yeah. Oh, good, good. Well, is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your life or experiences? You know, thank you for bringing all this and sharing it with me.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:46:49] So you can keep that. But I have to take these because they're my only copies.

**Lata Murti:** [00:46:54] That's fine. But maybe.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:46:56] Oh, you wanted to make copies of something?

**Lata Murti:** [00:46:58] If I can. If let's. I'll see if I can in just a couple of minutes. So where is your husband from?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:47:05] He was born in New Jersey.

**Lata Murti:** [00:47:07] Okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:47:08] And he's. We've been together a long time.

**Lata Murti:** [00:47:16] So he's not from here?

**Valentine Nishihara:** No

**Lata Murti:** But he likes it here.

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yeah.

**Lata Murti:** Yeah.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:47:21] This is the best place.

**Lata Murti:** [00:47:22] Yeah.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:47:25] And I have people who said, Oh, they like seasons and I. I'd rather not have to contend with seasons. It's nice to visit them.

**Lata Murti:** [00:47:34] Yeah, exactly. Yeah. I like snow for just a few days a year. That's it.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:47:39] Well, let's go to where the leaves are changing for ten days or five days.

**Lata Murti:** [00:47:46] So anything else you wanted to tell me or.

**Valentine Nishihara:** No

**Lata Murti:** No. Well, thank you again for your time. And again. You are You're okay with me sharing?

**Valentine Nishihara:** Yes.

**Lata Murti:** Everything I've recorded or parts of it. Great. I. Do you know of anybody else who's. Who considers themselves an ethnic or immigrant American that I could also interview for this study. Any friends or anybody you know, your sister, I guess you were saying? Yeah, in Santa Barbara.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:48:35] Now. She has a fantastic house. Her house, I think there are 26 bedrooms.

**Lata Murti:** [00:48:42] Oh, wow.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:48:43] And there is a succulent garden as well as regular garden. And it's. I think the living room is 24 by 36. Feet. It's a big house.

**Lata Murti:** [00:49:03] How long has she lived there?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:49:07] It was her husband's family's house, and they used to have parties there for a lot of the Hollywood people. So she had, it was kind of a party house for Hollywood.

**Lata Murti:** [00:49:22] Well, so you and your siblings are. Third generation Japanese.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:49:30] Americans. Yes, My, my grandparents would be considered first, and then my, my both parents were born in California, so we'll be the third.

**Lata Murti:** [00:49:43] So what brought your grandparents to the U.S.? Do you kno?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:49:48] I. I don't know. Probably work. I mean, money.

**Lata Murti:** [00:49:53] Right. And what did your parents do again?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:49:58] My father was a farmer and. And a cabinetmaker.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:02] That's right.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:50:03] He did beautiful work.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:06] Do you still have any of his cabinets?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:50:10] I don't think so. But he did really fine work.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:17] And did your mother work at all or. No.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:50:20] She was a housewife.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:22] Yeah. With five kids. And so did any of your siblings go into the military?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:50:29] No. I'm the only one.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:31] You're the only one.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:34] Did any.

**Valentine Nishihara:** My brother went to police work in Oakland, which is kind of a difficult area because it's.

**Lata Murti:** Yeah

**Valentine Nishihara:** It has a high crime rate.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:44] This was your younger brother.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:50:46] Oh, no. Well, he is here. He's ten years younger than I.

**Lata Murti:** [00:50:49] Oh, okay. Okay, yeah. What other careers did your siblings pursue? What other careers did your siblings pursue?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:51:04] One sister is in social work but I think she's retired now.

**Lata Murti:** [00:51:08] Okay. Okay.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:51:11] That was the one in Hawaii.

**Lata Murti:** [00:51:12] Oh okay. But no one else did computer programming or math?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:51:19] No.

**Lata Murti:** [00:51:20] Or real estate. Just you. So you're really different from the rest of your family?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:51:26] I get my hands into things.

**Lata Murti:** [00:51:27] Yeah. That's great. So how many nieces and nephews do you have?

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:51:35] Actually, not very many. I have one niece and one nephew. And that, they are my brother’s.

**Lata Murti:** [00:51:45] In Oakland. Or in.

**Valentine Nishihara:** [00:51:48] In Fremont.

**Lata Murti:** [00:51:48] In Fremont. Okay. All right. Well, great.