

train: scared
old train / shades
quarantined on train
whooping cough

13

1 Martha Hirose,
2 Mary Akasi,
3 Okum Yamamoto,
4 & Grace Isitani Interview
5 Date: 3/7/95
6 Experiences at Heart Mountain Relocation Camp
7 Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

8 SM: Just before I turned the tape on you talked about some
9 of your feelings of being scared and you got into the
10 train ride. Why don't you go back and talk about the
11 scared feelings because I think that is an important
12 aspect of it.

13 GROUP: The scared feeling was because they wouldn't tell us
14 where we were going and we had to pull the shades down.
15 Pull the shades down whenever we went into town and
16 they said oh they were going to stop and we said oh boy
17 we get to get off and it was a bean field or something,
18 nothing there and they stopped for, how long did they
19 stop? Oh, sometimes half an hour or so and when they
20 stopped those trains they just jogged us.

21 SM: The train jogged?

22 GROUP: Yes, I think it was the turn of the century, old, old,
23 old, had the velveteen looking ah, rickety rackety,
24 that is why it took us twice or three times as long to
25 get to our destination and I don't know what purpose it
26 was to draw the shades down.

27 SM: The shades were down?

28 GROUP: Yeah, and so every time we came to a station they made
29 us pull the shade down. I think they didn't want
30 anybody to see us. They might cause a riot, wow.

31 SM: If they saw you going on the train?

32 GROUP: Well I don't know, maybe they didn't like the idea or
33 something. We are going against our, you know they
34 were taking us against our will. And then when the
35 children, we were quaranteened on one train, our
36 husbands didn't come. I had to take care of the two
37 little babies by myself. Oh my gosh two, and he
38 couldn't come near us. I don't know why they did that.

39 SM: Was that hard?

40 GROUP: Three children yeah. She had three, oh how awful. And
41 they had whooping cough. We didn't know but we were
42 just quaranteened cause somebody was sick. I wasn't
43 worried because when we were living in L.A. and the

1 next door neighbor's little boy had whooping cough I
2 called the doctor right away and I said you know, and
3 he said well come in and we will give you a shot. He
4 is a little young, but you know that protected him.

5 SM: Now tell me did you all have children when you went to
6 Heart Mountain or were some of the children born after
7 you got there?

8 GROUP: { I had two children before I went to camp. I became
9 pregnant in camp so I had my baby in camp at Heart
10 Mountain.

11 SM: Were you married shortly before you went to Heart
12 Mountain?

13 GROUP: { No, my baby came one year after I was married.

14 SM: Ok, because I have talked to a lot of women who had
15 weddings planned and they hurried them up so they
16 wouldn't be separated when they went to camp so there
17 were a lot of marriages in like February and March of
18 1942, right in there. And, what about you?

19 GROUP: { I had one. He was a year old and I was pregnant.

20 SM: At the time you went to camp you were pregnant?

21 GROUP: When I went to Heart Mountain. And she was so nice,
22 she said she is pregnant so please let her sleep on
23 (laughter)...

24 SM: She did that?

25 GROUP: Yeah, she did that for me and so I got to sleep on a
26 bed. Today is Mark's birthday too. Oh is it?

27 SM: I'm sorry did you have... *missing info*

28 GROUP: Yes I had her. No she was just a newborn, about three
29 months.

30 SM: Three months old and so you went on the train too.

31 GROUP: Oh yeah, Joanne was just born too. My second child was
32 born in January and when we went into camp (unable to
33 make out the conversation)...Ah, to ah Santa Anita,
34 that would be around April or May of 1942. September
35 we went to Heart Mountain. Then we left, it depends on

dust storm
problems & milk access

1 where you were going. So we left from May we stayed in
2 Santa Anita you know, the race track. That was
3 converted into barracks and we left there in the middle
4 of September. And then when we reached Heart Mountain
5 it snowed. They had an early snow. And then we had,
6 of course dust storms. A dust storm greeted us and I
7 thought what kind of a place are we in? Never seen a
8 dust storm before.

9 SM: We have a lot of those in Wyoming. So that was quite a
10 change for you.

11 GROUP: And then we had to get off and walk, didn't we walk
12 quite a ways? Umhmm, there was no taxi service. And
13 my son wanted milk and there was no milk to be found.
14 I had the baby and I had the little one and they
15 wouldn't let my husband come with me and so here I am
16 alone with the two babies. Then you go to the, I know
17 I walked to where you eat, the mess hall, and then they
18 said no we don't have anything for you. They weren't
19 ready for us.

20 SM: There was no milk?

21 GROUP: No. I think that was one of the worst parts, we had
22 money to buy but you couldn't go buy it. It was so
23 sad, you know your baby is crying.

24 SM: You said that was one of the worst parts, why?

25 GROUP: Because, you know, if you are not breast feeding them
26 your babies can't wait.

27 SM: What did you do?

28 GROUP: Well we had to wait until they brought the bottles
29 around. That's right. So we were shaking the babies
30 up and down. Same way at Santa Anita too. I had a
31 hard time looking for milk. And I pushed the what do
32 you call them, strollers, and my boy's shoe had a big
33 hole in the toe because he was dragging it. Oh, you
34 didn't know it was dragging? No. Oh that was too bad.
35 Here I am trying to find milk for him, you know. Yeah,
36 and you are going fast too. When you think about it, I
37 had forgotten all about it.

story of
looking
for
milk

38 I went with my husband's family so here we had two
39 brothers and his mother and my husband and I with the
40 two babies. We all stuck in one room. Oh. Yeah, we

1 were all in one room so my husband made a curtain like
2 and the baby would cry in the night and here was the
3 whole...so that was really something. So I went to the
4 housing department. Every day I walked to the housing
5 I said you have to give us another room because, yes,
6 we are all Yamamotos but you know, I am married to one
7 of the boys and we have a family of our own. I don't
8 care how small it is, just give us another room. So
9 finally they gave me a room. It was really just one
10 narrow room. If my husband stood up I had to sit down
11 that is how it was, it was so small.

*Yamamoto
family*

12 SM: But you had a little privacy.

13 GROUP: Yeah, that is it, I had a little privacy. I didn't
14 mind that. But just think, sleeping and everything
15 with the whole family.

16 SM: I thought that would be awfully hard being young
17 marrieds and having a family.

18 GROUP: Yeah and have two little babies and oh gee, that was
19 the worst part for me I think.

20 That night when my brother-in-law came back he came to
21 live with us so it was that little tiny place too. So
22 I went to the housing and asked them to give us a
23 bigger place so we got a bigger place, but still you
24 had your family with you.

25 Martha, you should have been smart enough to...

26 Oh I can't leave her by herself)

27 Oh, I see, you had to take care of her.

28 Well see my mother-in-law had the two big boys to take
29 care of her.

30 Oh, that's one family.

31 Yeah, that's one family, but we were a different
32 family. Oh that was a mess.

33 SM: How long were you living with the whole family?

34 GROUP: Oh maybe two or three months.

35 SM: Two or three months? It was the middle of the winter

*interesting
rel to
family
strain*

outsider

S.A. - toilets

1 before you got your own place.

2 GROUP: See the barracks weren't ready yet. Her husband, my
3 husband, they went and finished the inside, remember?


4 SM: They weren't finished is that it?

5 GROUP: Everybody got out there ^{IR} carpenter things, they were all
6 carpenters.

7 That was the way my husband met her husband.

8 SM: Did you all know each other before you went?

9 GROUP: I just knew Martha and Mary.

10 I didn't know any of the others. 

11 No, I met her in the wash place.

12 Santa Anita Laundry and it gets stuck over there. The
3 water gets all plugged up, oh what a mess, what a mess.

14 SM: Tell me about that.

15 GROUP: It backed up, you know the sewage wasn't good or
16 something. *laundry at S.A.*

17 Yeah, in our barrack too. You couldn't go to the
18 bathroom because the toilet was right there.

19 But we thought, oh my god, what a mess.

20 SM: The toilets backed up?

21 GROUP: Yeah, yeah.

22 SM: So what did you do? Did you have to go off someplace
23 else to another latrine area?

24 GROUP: We just had to wait. It was hard to go to another
25 place.

26 I was lucky, one of my babies got really sick and I
27 thought what am I going to do, and my husband's family
28 doctor used to live right close by in Santa Anita so he
29 was real kind and came after whatever he had to do, he
30 would come and look at my kids in my barrack. He was
31 real nice every time you know, he gave me pills for the

*Another
kind
outsider*

jockey rooms at S.A.
privacy

GROUP INTERVIEW
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1 baby so I was lucky that way.

2 They fixed the horse stables into a hospital. *accurate?*

3 SM: At Santa Anita?

4 GROUP: Uhuh

5 SM: I didn't realize there was a hospital in the horse
6 stalls, I knew people lived in them.

7 GROUP: No, it was just a makeshift.

8 Those who lived in the barracks you know like the Heart
9 Mountain barracks, but some of us we all had to live in
10 the whole stable and then those who had the jockey's
11 little room, they had plywood stained so it was a very
12 luxury.

13 SM: Oh the jockey rooms were good rooms?

14 GROUP: Yeah, my girlfriend had the jockey room and it had
15 plywood and it was stained kind of brown and the nice
16 flooring. But in the stables they just put asphalt
17 down you know, and then weeds would be shooting out
18 from the cracks and then the top area is all open, if
19 someone talked loud about three stalls away we could
20 hear it. And then we had the dutch doors, you know,
21 the kind that open one way and the bottom is
22 stationary, you could open that too, but that would be
23 divide the front portion where we lived and the back
24 portion. So I lived with my father and my brother and
25 my sister and then my husband and I were in the back
26 room together because we were married already.

27 SM: But you must not have had too much privacy.

28 GROUP: No you can't, because see the top ceiling is all open
29 like I told you, you could hear people three stalls
30 away so you kind of whispered.

31 SM: You probably all heard lots of things didn't you?

32 GROUP: Oh yeah.

33 SM: The privacy issue, was that something all the time at
34 Heart Mountain too that there wasn't a lot of privacy,
35 I mean it doesn't sound like it.

get drawing
of barracks
layout -

hay-stuffed mattresses
why did you stand for it?

1 GROUP: No, even if you were cut off in this room, but you
2 know, you can hear everything. But it was three, two
3 in the middle and two on the side. The two big ones
4 were together and the one bedroom, I mean not one
5 bedroom but one room on the edge on both ends.
6 We lived that way for three or four years.
7 Yeah, and when we first went to Santa Anita we had to
8 make our own mattress you know. Stuff hay in it.
9 Well we did that in Heart Mountain too.
10 Yeah, we did it in the beginning.
11 SM: Did you do that at Heart Mountain also, stuff
12 mattresses with hay?
13 GROUP: Oh yeah, for the time being because I guess they didn't
14 have any mattresses.
15 Later on we got mattresses.
16 It was just such a big project for anyone to take care
17 of all this 10,000 people at Heart Mountain. So you
18 know, things were delayed, it is war time and they
19 couldn't get their mattresses on time and so it was
20 just one of those things.
21 SM: Is that how you looked at it as just one of those
22 things?
23 GROUP: We didn't, I didn't make such a fuss you know, you got
24 to roll with the punches.
25 * That's what is wrong with us. Our kids are the ones
26 that are complaining about how we were treated.
27 Yeah some of them really got...why did you stand for it
28 they say, but they don't realize, it is just like when
29 the blacks couldn't sit in the front of the bus they
30 could only stand or sit in the back. They couldn't go
31 to the restrooms with the whites, you know, all that in
32 the south, so it was the same type of thing that was
33 going on.
34 Well we just resigned ourselves to it. See our parents
35 couldn't own the land. They couldn't buy land, they
36 couldn't lease a place. After the war they finally let

this is
great
discussion

use

land
law

1 them do it.

2 But if they had a child that was 18 years or over they
3 would lease it in that child's name, their son's name
4 or their daughters name.

5 SM: Because of?

6 GROUP: Because of this law. And during the war Chinese people
7 were on the right side with the United States, so they
8 got citizenship during that time, but the Japanese
9 after we came back we had to fight for our citizenship
10 for our parents. But my husband was born in Japan and
11 he came to America when he was three years old so he
12 can't speak Japanese, he speaks English because he had
13 his education here in the United States.

14 But they felt he was a Japanese.

15 Yeah, that is what I was worried about because he was
16 not a United States citizen I just thought he was going
 to get kicked out.

18 Well my brother you know, he came when he was two years
19 old and they took my father and my oldest brother and
20 they went to ~~Oiston~~ and then they took my other brother
21 that came when he was two years old.

22 Just because he wasn't an American citizen huh?

23 I don't know what it was.

24 SM: Did you feel like at the time of Pearl Harbor there was
25 a lot of anti Japanese sentiment, did you experience
26 that?

27 GROUP: We felt so bad, I did, I felt so bad. It wasn't my
28 doing or anything, but still our ancestors, we felt
29 very bad and scared. Scared of what was going to
30 happen to us.

31 When Pearl Harbor, I was in ^{Terminal} Termin Island, and they got
32 loud speakers and they said whoever don't live here
33 better hurry up and get out so we went to see my
34 friends who had just had a baby and so I took my mother
35 and we went to see her and that is when it happened and
36 so we hurried out of there and we took my friend too.
 The next day I think we invited them to my sister's
38 house and they lived there. It was on a Sunday I

what are we going to do?
"when you look at my face, it
is another story"

1 remember.

2 SM: It was a Sunday.

3 GROUP: Yeah, and my niece was going to sewing school here and
4 she came and she said everybody looked at me so funny
5 and she didn't know that the war had started. We were
6 listening to the radio, I guess it was around lunch
7 time or something. Boy did I feel terrible, I thought
8 oh goodness.

9 SM: That must have been a terrible conflict.

10 GROUP: Grace and I and another friend of ours, we were off in
11 the mountains near Pasadena and that is when we heard
12 it.

13 Yes, we were on a picnic.

14 Yeah, Sunday morning.

15 SM: And how did you hear about it?

16 GROUP: Well some of the...

17 As we came ah down the hill they said "it's war, war,
18 war with Japan."

19 SM: Well did you think something might happen to you
20 because of that?

21 GROUP: What are we going to do, you know, that is more how...

22 Well you know, in our family my father always said you
23 are American citizens, this is your country, that is
24 what he always told me but then yet when you look at my
25 face it is another story, you know. is another story

26 SM: Did people look at you differently?

27 GROUP: Oh yes I think they did.

28 Talking about your father, my father said something
29 like that to me to, so if the war breaks out you fight
30 for the United States and we have to go to Japan.

31 Well no, my father said that I am a Japanese citizen.
32 I can't get an American citizen but America has given
33 him the opportunity to work and raise a family so he

1 has to be grateful to America he said, even if I am not
2 a citizen. So even if I have to cry he said I have to
3 be on the American side. He was Japanese you know
4 because he was a school teacher in Japan so he had
5 strong feelings but his principal was the way he
6 thought, that the country that had given him a
7 livelihood to raise his children, well he owed more to
8 that country than he did to Japan. So even if I have
9 tears and crying I would have to serve America, that is
10 what he told me. And then my husband, of all the darn
11 things, he would even tell me. When they came to
12 recruit officers in Heart Mountain, Well he is Japanese
13 born so you know they didn't want him, but he went
14 anyway without telling me and I had the baby already.
15 He says "ok, I'll serve, I'll volunteer if you give me
16 my American citizenship right now." But you know what,
17 the officers that came to induct the fellows well they
18 couldn't do anything. You know they have to go through
19 channels to find out how a person could get American
20 citizenship. Then he said "well you serve and then we
21 will give the American citizenship." He says "no, I
22 don't want it after I die, I want it before I go."
23 Otherwise if you are an American citizen you get all
24 the privilege of being an American soldier. But what
25 is the use of going if you are going to go as nothing.

*conflicted
loyalties*

26 SM: So what happened?

27 GROUP: Well he didn't go. But he is flat foot anyway. He
28 can't hear in one ear maybe, I don't know, but you know
29 at that time my husband is very funny in certain
30 aspects. Even if I am sick in bed with a cold he says
31 "you better go and vote." I say I can't go vote, I'm
32 sick. But he said "no, you better go." But he
33 couldn't vote but he made me vote. He said "it's a
34 privilege to vote." And I would get out of my sick
35 bed just to go and vote and some of the things I don't
36 want to put down to check I just leave it alone. Do
37 you know what I mean, I will not go for anything just
38 to be checking. If I don't know I'll just leave it
39 blank. But he is so gungho about voting, you know,
40 because he couldn't vote.

loyalty

41 SM: How about now?

42 GROUP: That is the way he is, "come on let's go." That's what
43 he said, we have to vote. I mean maybe that is an
44 idiosyncrasy or something on his part, but he has
45 always had that feeling. Otherwise why would he try to

1 volunteer when I had a little baby? And he wanted to
2 be an American citizen. So finally he got his American
3 citizenship in 1952.

4 SM: That was a long time later.

5 GROUP: Well that is when everybody was able to get it.

6 SM: So you are telling me that there was a lot of loyalty
7 to the united states even though your families were
8 from Japan. Were all of your families born in Japan,
9 your parents?

10 GROUP: Yes

11 SM: They all were.

12 GROUP: My mother was stuck in jail over here. → U.S. → Little Tokyo
not Japan

13 Your mother?

14 My mother.

15 Why?

16 She was very active at the church. "round up"

17 Oh, you see they picked on people that were very active
18 as community leaders. Because they figured maybe
19 community leaders were spys or something.

20 Yeah because the ^{Buddhist} church right here, they always
21 used to serve the navy people that came from Japan,
22 what do you call those?

23 The ships with those cadets. Yeah, their first trip or
24 something they were training ships. They used to fix
25 them dinner or lunch. The ladies all got together and
26 they served them so that was seen as serving the
27 Japanese navy and I think that is why my mother was
28 taken away.

29 SM: I am curious about this because I was talking to
30 somebody else today about if some of the women also
31 were taken away as subversive and the apparently your
32 mother was considered. Somebody told me there weren't
33 very many women. Do you know more about that?

34 GROUP: I guess maybe the officers, maybe in the club. I don't

1 know. I think if they had children they were put in
2 the camps, but like her mother was very active in the
3 church and just because she serves tea or lunch or
4 dinner to the cadets that came on the training ship.
5 Well they were landing there, I mean the United States
6 allowed them to land so they come to Little Tokyo and
7 visit the town.

8 The Japanese community, they monitored the Japanese
9 over here too. >

10 And a lot of the old folks you know, they are from that
11 same country, same state or something and they are very
12 interested in them. *makes sense*

13 That's right, uhuh, the boys came from the same place
14 that my mother came from or something then she would
15 want to talk to them, you know.

16 SM: So what happened to your mother?

17 GROUP: They put her in jail and she said oh she just aged.

18 SM: She was really in jail, it wasn't just a camp?

19 GROUP: Oh yeah, you know like the prisoners you have to line
20 up in front of the jail stall or whatever and she went
21 in there and then they closed all the doors. She had
22 never been in jail and she came out and she told us oh
23 it was awful. *jail (subversives)*

24 SM: Was she there for awhile?

25 GROUP: Oh yeah, she lived in Posten. I didn't go to Posten I
26 went to Heart Mountain with his folks. My family went
27 to Posten so they were there 3 or 4 years.

28 I think Posten was the largest, they had three camps.
29 I went to Posten after my father kept telling us to
30 come.

31 Oh so you went to Posten from Heart Mountain?

32 Yeah, just about a year.

33 Oh that was so hot there.

34 I know, but I've never been separated from them for so
35 long that my father kept pestering my mother-in-law so

1 she finally ok'd it.

2 So she finally let you go.

3 I was supposed to go to Arkansas with my father and my
4 husband. But my sister was engaged and they were going
5 to Heart so they made all the plans for us to go to
6 Heart Mountain so I was able to see all my friends.
7 But see you have to be able to know how to do these
8 things during wartime you know. He was a
9 doctor/dentist you see so I guess he knew the channels,
10 what to do.

11 SM: How to get what you wanted.

12 GROUP: Yeah, otherwise it will take you too long and everybody
13 didn't know what was going on or what to do. They were
14 just guessing around. But fortunately we were able to
15 go up to Heart Mountain with them so our family

16 **(There is a lot of whisper like background conversation**
17 **that I can't make out here so am picking up where I can**
18 **hear it from.)** ...I mean posten. Once he went to
19 visit. Cause her husband, I remember her husband said
20 they were going to go to Posten so she will see my
21 folks so I gave her my folks name and everything and
22 then he went and I thought he came back.

23 No

24 He didn't come back?

25 Huhuh

26 Oh, he told me anyway, I heard him say that I knew that
27 was your dad because my daughter and another of my
28 nieces looked alike and so he just went up to them and
29 he asked them are you Mr. Wether? and he said yes.
30 Patty and you know one of the, looked so much alike.

31 SM: Was there a camp, you know, did camps have reputations
32 like it was better to be at one camp than another camp
33 or it didn't make any difference?

34 GROUP: **(They all talk at once here.)** ? ..was the worst place to
35 go. We had no choice. I signed up at union church,
36 didn't you sign up at Union Church?...I don't know...I
37 had given birth to her so we had to stay behind and we
38 were taken to the general hospital and do you know they

of problems

"when I got to H.M. I dried up"

GROUP INTERVIEW

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- 1 took her away from me. I wasn't able to feed her all
2 that time we were in the hospital.
- 3 SM: You mean, now this was at Heart Mountain?
- 4 GROUP: No, that was before we left.
5 The general hospital here.
6 No she was born in Queen of Angels. You know it was
7 such a time of worry that we would be separated or how
8 we were going to manage and so I ran a fever and so I
9 had to stay behind when all others went to Camp Santa
10 Anita.
11 Her husband left.
12 Uhuh, husband and my in-laws all left. So I had to go
13 to the General Hospital and they wanted to take her
14 away from me but I said "no, I'm breastfeeding." So
15 the doctor helped me through a lot. All that time, I
16 was in the General Hospital for 10 days.
17 Nobody could come and see you.
18 Oh I had one visitor. I was allowed one visitor and
19 that was caucasian. But I didn't know what had
20 happened to her. And do you know I was befriended by a
21 young black girl who was an aide and she would say
22 "your Patty is alright." She would come and give me
23 the news and so that is how I survived.
- 24 SM: And yet you were still trying to breastfeed and you
25 didn't have your baby with you?
- 26 GROUP: No, and so they would send that little machine to pump *breast pump*
27 it out. And never once did I see her. I just worried
28 about it. But you know I became dry.
29 Sure because I became dry when I would worry. At Heart
30 Mountain because I worried so. I had the baby here and
31 I took the baby with me, but see she was only three
32 months old and when I got to Heart Mountain I dried up.
33 SM: So you didn't have enough milk at that time?
34 GROUP: I went looking for milk and they won't give me milk.
35 SM: Well you know you were tired and stressed and trying to

hard getting milk early on

1 take care of a baby in a strange place. It is not real
2 surprising.

3 GROUP: If you could just run into a store and get your milk it
4 would have been another story, but when you can't get
5 out and just let the baby cry.

6 SM: Did you have to let the baby cry?

7 GROUP: Yes, until we were able to get the milk.

8 SM: Was that mainly early on or was that a continuing
9 problem?

10 GROUP: No, no, it was just early on.
11 When we got there, when we first got there.
12 Well things were disorganized anyway. I don't think
13 the government knew what they were doing. Everybody
14 was doing a guesswork.

15 SM: In some ways it sounds like if you already had small
16 children when you were going on the train to Heart
17 Mountain that was a lot harder than actually having the
18 baby at Heart Mountain when things were set up.

19 GROUP: That's right.

20 SM: Some of you had children when you were there, who?

21 GROUP: I had, Mark was born when we were at Heart Mountain.
22 She and I we were at the same hospital at the same
23 time.
24 Yeah, she had the baby the day before I did. !

25 SM: You had your babies at the same time?

26 GROUP: She was sleeping right next to me.

27 SM: Is that how you got acquainted?

28 GROUP: No.

29 SM: So right after the first of the year you had your
J babies in 1943. Ok, and when was your baby born?

concerns about future
thyroid/goiter
food

1 GROUP: Mine was 1942.
2
3 No after you.
4 But she had babies before she went.
5 You had two.
6 SM: You had two already so you had your third baby there.
7 And then did you have any more children there?
8 GROUP: After '47.
9 SM: After you came back to Los Angeles? You waited. You
10 know some women have told me they had good hospital
11 care, everything was free and there was nothing else
12 you had to do like cook, so it was a good time to have
13 babies. Did you feel that way or not?
14 GROUP: No. We didn't know what our future was going to be.
15 You know and I was married to a Japanese National, he
16 was born over there so I was worried more. I think I
17 worried so much. Either that or our diet was not as
18 proper as it should have been. We all, not we all, but
19 Grace and I we both developed a thyroid and a goiter.
20 SM: Well that is interesting because somebody I talked to
21 yesterday told me the same thing. That was common?
22 GROUP: Well I guess so
23 You go to the middle states and you don't get the
24 seasons you get on the coast.
25 Iodine, you need iodine. There was a lot of fish in
26 California.
27 Yeah in California you had a lot of fish.
28 SM: And you didn't have that at camp huh?
29 GROUP: No. So we lacked a certain amount of iodine.
30 Liver, lamb and liver and chicken.
31 And the last of that lamb stew. Mutton stew. To this
32 day I can't even stand the smell of the mutton stew. !
33 SM: Of what now?

Anemia
water

- 1 GROUP: Mutton stew. We had mutton stew so often.
- 2 Well that is lamb.
- 3 But when I was at Santa Anita I was just having my
4 morning sickness you know and the food in the mess
5 hall, how many mess halls did we have?
- 6 We had quite a few.
- 7 We had to stand in line and it was so hot. My husband
8 said you go sit in the shade and I will stand in line
9 so that is what happened but I was anemic because I
10 didn't get the proper food.
- 11 Yeah I was anemic too.
- 12 If I find two little pieces of meat like that I was
13 lucky.
- 14 SM: So you didn't actually eat very well when you were at
 Santa Anita.
- 16 GROUP: In Heart Mountain too.
- 17 SM: So what were you nauseated or just anemic or what?
- 18 GROUP: Well I couldn't even walk. You know, I'd walk and then
19 I would feel dizzy. I had to sit down.
- 20 SM: Did you have enough water?
- 21 GROUP: Well there was no water inside the barrack.
- 22 SM: Well that's what I wondered if just getting water was a
23 chore.
- 24 GROUP: Oh it was.
- 25 SM: Because that is something else pregnant women need so
26 much more of, fluid. So you were anemic and you two
27 had goiters. And that developed in the camp?
- 28 GROUP: Well yeah do to our pregnancy because I guess we lacked
29 a certain amount.
- 30 SM: So you didn't get pregnant. Do you think that had
 something to do with not getting pregnant in camp?



gauze packed in vagina PP

- 1 GROUP: No, I became pregnant in camp or Santa Anita or
2 wherever it was.
- 3 SM: Oh, ok.
- 4 GROUP: So I guess we just lacked a certain amount of fish
5 diet. You know we were so accustomed to eating a lot
6 of fish and that was not as often as it should have
7 been.] normal
diet
- 8 I became anemic too after I had my son in camp. And
9 her husband was working at the meat poultry place or...
- 10 SM: Martha's husband was?
- 11 GROUP: Yeah so then she would always every week, cause the
12 doctor ordered that I get chicken, every week I had
13 chicken.
- 14 Is that right?
- 15 Yeah all the time I was in camp. And then we had these
16 belly stoves you know in Heart Mountain. They burned
17 coal and so on that we put our pots and we cooked on
18 that so we had chicken all the time. I was very lucky.
- 19 SM: You had the right friends huh? Did that help your
20 anemia?
- 21 GROUP: Yes it did because I was ok, but I was very anemic and
22 another thing I got is when I had Mark, we had this, I
23 won't mention any doctor, but this doctor wasn't very
24 good and...
- 25 SM: You can mention him, it's 50 years later. ☺
- 26 GROUP: He is gone already anyway, but after I had the baby
27 they never did this, but in camp they packed gauze into
28 me. They packed gauze into me and then they forgot
29 that they had packed it.
- 30 SM: Were you bleeding, is that what you are saying?
- 31 GROUP: Yeah, when you have the baby you are bleeding,
32 naturally you are bleeding so he packed me with the
33 gauze and then he forgot that he had so then my husband
34 would come to visit me in the hospital and say "my god
it stinks in here." And it was rotting inside of me.
36 So then when you know Miss Haba Husa, she was a nurse a

?
Haba Husa

*Nurse
Husafusa*

holding baby back

- 1 real kind nurse.
- 2 SM: What was her name?
- 3 GROUP: Haba Husa. And she said something is wrong so she
- 4 tried to douche me you know, and that little tiny pipe
- 5 couldn't go in and that is when she found out. So she
- 6 brought the pad and she just started to pull it out and
- 7 I counted (?) like this of gauze. I could have been
- 8 killed.
- 9 SM: You certainly ^{could} have gotten an infection.
- 10 GROUP: Yeah, that's it, that is how come they gave me chicken 
- 11 every week after that. *sounds like Amy Taw!*
- 12 SM: That really was not good, you are right about that.
- 13 GROUP: Things like that happened.
- 14 When I was going to have my baby they said wait, wait,
- 15 wait and the doctor wouldn't come so they were just
- 16 pushing me and now I think about it I say it is a good
- 17 thing he isn't mentally retarded because they just held
- 18 me you know, pushed me so I wouldn't have my baby.
- 19 SM: How did they stop you from having, you wanted to push
- 20 the baby out.
- 21 GROUP: Well they were holding with the head.
- 22 SM: Holding the baby back?
- 23 GROUP: Yeah, the head would appear, but if they just held the
- 24 head the baby can't come out.
- 25 **Another spot where they all talked on top of each**
- 26 **other.)** Another friend, she lost the baby because of
- 27 that.
- 28 SM: Of holding the baby back?
- 29 GROUP: Yeah because he don't get oxygen. The doctor didn't
- 30 come until the baby died. 
- 31 SM: So they didn't hold the mother's legs together but they
- 32 held the baby's head sometimes. And would the nurses
- 33 do that?
- 34 GROUP: Now and then I hear of a baby because of birth they are

inexperienced nurses and

extended time in stirrups

GROUP INTERVIEW

Page 20

- 1 retarded you know. He is a nervous kid so I always say
2 it's my fault you know. I was so worried and
3 everything happened he says "oh mom it isn't bad."
- 4 SM: I haven't heard that about holding the babys back. You
5 know I have heard stories about that over time, but not
6 from Heart Mountain particularly. But here you had it
7 happen to you and you knew somebody that it happened
8 to.
- 9 GROUP: Because there weren't that many doctors to take care of
10 you so you had all of these nurses aides, inexperienced
11 nurses aides that were taking over.
- 12 SM: Did they take care of you like in labor or when?
- 13 GROUP: Well they were right with the doctors during birth so
14 they had my foot strapped in from 5:30 in the morning
15 and I didn't give birth until 2:30. !
- 16 SM: In the afternoon? You had your legs up all that time?
- 17 GROUP: That's right.
- 18 SM: Why?
- 19 GROUP: Well because they felt the baby was going to come any
20 minute and then when it is 12:00 at noon Dr. Kanoshta,
21 he says I am going to the lunch and the girls are just
22 ah, they are not regular nurses, they are just nurses
23 aides say "you can't leave her and go now." He says
24 "I'll be back, I'll be back." But you know the doctors }
25 are just blazae about things like that you know. And
26 so they left me and he came back maybe an hour or so
27 later.
- 28 SM: Are you in the delivery room lying on the table?
- 29 GROUP: In the ^{stirrups} styrup or whatever it was.
- 30 SM: Wow, did that happen to anybody else?
- 31 GROUP: They could see the head. My little boy, I guess he had
32 a big head, it wouldn't come out.
- 33 No it was your first birth that is why. ☺
- SM: Well it is pretty hard to push out when you are lying
35 flat on your back with your legs up. I mean that makes

*check name
in delmas
journal*

"we don't yell, we don't cry, we don't scream"

1 it harder not easier.

2 GROUP: Of course.

3 Well he was probably overworked.

4 All the doctors were overworked. They were only
5 getting \$19.

6 SM: Are you saying there weren't enough of them? They were
7 Japanese American doctors weren't they?

8 GROUP: Oh yes, they were Japanese.

9 And they kept cutting you because the head wouldn't
10 come out. They kept cutting you. My bottom was
11 crooked. My bottom was crooked. *My case does*

12 SM: It sounds like you had a hard time.

13 GROUP: No, but you know, it is your first baby. You don't
14 know what to expect so if you hear of me you say oh you
15 had a hard time, but at that time I didn't know.

16 SM: Did you have any medication or anything to help you to
17 be more comfortable?

18 GROUP: Oh I don't know I was up with mine, I was just a good
19 little patient that's all.

20 SM: Did you make any noise, did you yell or?

21 GROUP: Oh no. You know they say sometimes the Japanese
22 ancestors that you have you know,

23 Gama, yeah, they are very stoic

24 SM: They are what?

25 GROUP: Very stoic.

26 SM: Stoic yeah, somebody told me that yesterday. And so
27 you all lived up to that?

28 GROUP: And you were expected to. You know we don't yell, we
29 don't cry, we don't scream.

30 Nobody told me but it was just part of our nature or
31 something.

bear it, grin & bear it
grandma's labor story

- 1 They instill that in us when we are born you know.
2 Don't talk too much.
- 3 SM: Do you raise your own children that way too that you
4 cope and you don't...
- 5 GROUP: It's slowly going away.
- 6 No I didn't do too much of that. Oh a little bit
7 because it is instilled in us, but I think they learned
8 to be upon there own.
- 9 Did your mother? → to daughter listening
- 10 I think maybe I felt, but I think Marilyn is different
11 because we are several years apart, a different
12 generation. They are more lenient. I don't know if it
13 was more lenient or if she was just more (?)
- 14 SM: The times are so different.
- 15 GROUP: Umhmm, seven years or five years, we are different from
16 our parents time, but then the kids, I get all mixed
17 up, sometimes I am talking about several different
18 generations, my kids "mom, that's her mother you are
19 talking about."
- 20 SM: Well it sounds like you all had kind of hard times when
21 you had your babies. I mean not only during the
22 childbirth but ah...
- 23 GROUP: Oh yes. Ah well no, it was just that you were expected
24 to bear it, grin and bear it.
- 25 SM: And who expected that of you?
- 26 GROUP: Well we were taught since we were children. It is
27 embedded in us.
- 28 My mother-in-law said that "when you can no longer see
29 the door knob straight the labor pain will be that
30 harsh and painful and you have to bear it until when
31 you can no longer see the door knob straight then you
32 are almost ready to have your baby. ←
- 33 SM: Well was that true for you?
- GROUP: Yes it was labor pain was very painful.

1 SM: They are painful. What about breastfeeding you babies,
2 did most women breastfeed or did a lot of women bottle
3 feed or what did you do? How did you feed your babies?

4 GROUP: Well I had hoped to baby breastfeed but you know, she
5 was taken away.

6 SM: You said you pumped.

7 GROUP: Yeah, pumped but then I guess I worried so much about
8 the baby that I lost it.

9 Nothing came out just a little teensy weensy bit.

10 I think I nursed my ...

11 When you are all worried and you don't know what the
12 future is.

13 SM: When you had your babies did you worry a lot about the
14 future is that what you are saying?

15 GROUP: Umhmm, well, I had a lot of problems in camp because my
16 husband broke his back.

17 Fractured his back?

18 SM: He did? In camp?

19 GROUP: Yeah, fractured his back and he was in the hospital for
20 three months he wore a cast. And then after that he
21 came back he had a tumor of the rectum and it was
22 malignant so I had a lot of trouble. } 1 ♀

23 SM: A lot of hardship. Did he recover?

24 GROUP: He recovered, yeah he recovered. He went to what is
25 that town in Montana?

26 Billings.

27 Billings to get radiation treatments. I couldn't go
28 with him. And he was ok. He lived for 20 years and
29 then he got cancer again.

30 In the same area?

No.

friends -
laundry

1 A different area.

2 So once you get, you know.

3 SM: So you were coping with a baby and your husband was
4 having all these health problems. How did you manage
5 that? That sounds pretty overwhelming.

6 GROUP: With all these friends.

7 SM: Did friends make a difference?

8 GROUP: Oh yes.

9 SM: Did women spend time together. Like you as young
10 mothers, did you spend time with other women?

11 GROUP: I think we were kind of busy. You know because there
12 is no water in the barrack, you have to go to the
13 latrine or wherever, the laundry room to get your water
14 and it was snowing and it was real cold and we had to
15 bathe the kids and so what we had to do was bundle them
16 up, put their clothes and everything on, you know their
17 snow suit and everything and then we walked to the
18 laundry room or bathroom and then take their clothes
19 all off again and then bathe them. After we bathed
20 them we put them all together again. That was work,
21 but we did this every day.

22 SM: Every day?

23 GROUP: Yeah and we had to wash every day too. So we would
24 meet at the laundry.

25 SM: Well tell me about that because I have heard you know,
26 everybody had all these diapers to wash and that is
27 where the women would gather and talk.

28 GROUP: And in our room we had a wire and hung up our diapers
29 or whatever.

30 Cause if you hung it outside it was so cold it froze
31 like a board and we are not used to that so we hung
32 nothing outside.

33 Well washing diapers was very hard, but the sheets, oh
34 that was hard work.

35 SM: What was?

Wringing sheets by hand

GROUP INTERVIEW
Page 25

- 1 GROUP: Scrubbing the sheets. Oh that was hard work. Couldn't
2 wring it.
- 3 SM: Did you have a wringer? You did the wringing by hand?
- 4 GROUP: Oh yeah, we did everything by hand.
5 Just like the olden days.
- 6 SM: I heard some people actually brought wringers with them
7 to camp.
- 8 GROUP: Oh they did?
9 I think some people just ordered them.
10 Just ordered the wringers later on, those who had large
11 families.
- 12 SM: But most of you just did the wringing by hand? You had
13 to wash the sheets and how often did you wash sheets?
- 14 GROUP: Oh every week.
15 Because of living in that little quarters with that
16 coal burning.
- 17 SM: Oh they got the sheets really that dirty?
- 18 GROUP: Dirty and then the wind storms would bring in the sand.
19 Oh my goodness, it was something huh?
20 Oh inside your nose got all...
- 21 SM: What happened, you mean the dust went up your nose?
- 22 GROUP: No, but you know when it is so cold it freezes inside
23 there too and your nose is running. And you touch the
24 door knob and oh my goodness.
- 25 SM: Did your clothes keep you warm enough that you had? I
26 mean it sounds like you were really cold. I mean we
27 get cold nowadays and we have central heating and
28 insulation and you didn't have any of that. Well you
29 had a stove and
- GROUP: Just that coal stove.

- 1 We used to hug it.
- 2 And then when the truck load of coal comes, boy do we
3 all run up there to get it. Everybody is fighting for
4 the coal.
- 5 In a certain part of the block they dumped the coal and
6 we were supposed to get it. The stories, I tell you,
7 ladies getting the coal in and some man said he got
8 into a woman's skirt and didn't know it. Kind of dark
9 in here isn't it? They were inside of it.
- 10 No kidding?
- 11 Yeah, something like that really happened.
- 12 If you don't you don't get your coal.
- 13 That was all we were allowed you know was that one
14 truck load.
- That's right with so many barracks.
- 16 And a lot of time the men were at work you know.
- 17 SM: So it became the women's responsibility to get the coal
18 because the men were out, what outside the camp often
19 or they were working in the camp?
- 20 GROUP: In the camp.
- 21 Some were carpenters. My husband worked at the milk
22 station.
- 23 SM: What helped you to just keep going on?
- 24 GROUP: We had entertainment and things for kids and we had
25 picnics sometimes.
- 26 I don't ever remember even going to a picnic.
- 27 They had ball games, you know, baseball or something
28 and we would go watch that.
- 29 I always remembered this one lady she would stay and
30 watch the ball game and she would bring out her breast
31 and feed the baby. I bet she wasn't a Nisea.]
- 32 Oh yeah, she was a Nisea.

1 Really?

2 Uhmmm


3 SM: Was that unusual to breast feed in public?

4 GROUP: Yeah, we never did that and went back home.

5 Sometimes the first generation, the older generation
6 they would think it was just a natural process of
7 feeding your baby, but we were the second generation.
8 We would never think about bringing out our breast and
9 feeding.

10 SM: Oh you wouldn't?

11 GROUP: Yeah, but this one lady she didn't mind. Oh gosh, I
12 used to think oh gosh.

13 Didn't she put a hanky over it? 

14 No, she didn't care.

15 SM: And you were surprised?

16 GROUP: I was surprised because I would never do that.

17 I can just see

18 SM: Did you ever go into Cody or Powell? You were talking
19 about things you did.

20 GROUP: Are you kidding?

21 The only time we ever went out we both had our
22 thyroidectomy outside the camp in Billings, Montana.
23 That was the one and only time we were ever allowed
24 out.

25 See, if you want to go out you had to get a special
26 permit.

27 I remember though there was a river nearby the camp so
28 we got permission, we had this little wagon, this
29 little red wagon. So we put the kids on there and we
30 went out and we went by the shore and we had a picnic.
31 But then there were a lot of horses. A bunch of horses
32 came trotting and oh I was so scared you know. Wild
33 horses I think.


- 1 Didn't they have wild horses in Wyoming?
- 2 SM: Yeah, there ~~as~~^{are} wild horses. So they were wild horses
3 and they started running toward you?
- 4 GROUP: Yeah so we ran. I remember I grabbed the kids and we
5 went right by the water so then the horses went by.
6 But I had that kind of experience. But the kids played
7 by the river you know and they had a good day.
- 8 SM: Were the summers better for you? I mean that must have
9 been summer weather.
- 10 GROUP: They were better but.
- 11 SM: Of course summer isn't really a long time in Wyoming.
- 12 GROUP: No because I remember September 4th or 5th when we
13 first got there it was snowing.
- 14 SM: What was the date?
- 15 GROUP: Middle of September. About the 15th or 14th. That is
16 when I arrived.
- 17 SM: And it was snowing when you got there?
- 18 GROUP: No, but a few days later it did and they said it was an
19 early snow. snow
- 20 When I had Mark it was March 7th and it was snowing.
- 21 We had snow way into the summer months.
- 22 Yeah, June.
- 23 Yeah we did.
- 24 SM: And so when summer came what did you do? Did you get
25 out more when it finally did come? Because March still
26 is winter in Wyoming, you are right.
- 27 GROUP: We had a little birthday party with whatever we could
28 gather up. One thing good about it, we would buy
29 icecream from the canteen and you could just put it
30 outside in the snow and it wouldn't melt.
- SM: One of the things I am just kind of curious about is
32 how women got together and what they talked about. You

1 know I have heard little gossip stories about things
2 that went on around the camp--kind of scandals.

3 GROUP: We were in camp and like the laundry room that is where
4 most of the ladies got together.

5 SM: Do you remember some good gossip from camp?

6 GROUP: No, I think we were too busy with kids. I didn't hear
7 much gossip did you?

8 No, our block was pure. 

9 No, no, I'm just saying some blocks had a lot of
10 problems, you know, the husband fell in love with
11 someone else or something like that. }

12 SM: Did that happen very often?

13 GROUP: You know the gossip went around and around. It was my
14 husband's good friends and they were a little older
15 than us and she bought, she paid for his freedom, I
16 think \$5,000.

17 *gossip* { And did they get married?

18 { Yeah, they got married.

19 { So in order to get a divorce he paid \$5,000 to his
20 { wife? And then he was able to marry the other lady?

21 Umhmm

22 SM: Ooo, that was a lot of money in those days.

23 GROUP: Of course that must have been most of his money, either
24 that or he had a lot of money. But still that's a lot
25 of money to pay.

26 No, she is the one that paid off the wife of him. It
27 was she.

28 SM: That must have created a lot of discussion.

29 GROUP: Are they happily married today?

30 Ah he is gone now. She is still...

31 Did he remarry?

Nisei sacrificed a lot

1 She?

2 She.

3 No.

4 Wives don't get ^{re?} married often, but the fellows they
5 have to get married.

6 SM: Did very many young girls get pregnant when they
7 weren't married at camp? Do you remember that
8 happening?

9 GROUP: No among our friends.

10 Not in my block. It just depends which block.

11 What block were you in?

12 23, I was right there in the front. The first block by
13 the fire station.

14 You were in block 25?

15 25, then I moved to 29 because my mother-in-law came.

16 SM: So sometimes you moved around. One of the things I
17 wondered is just how it felt to be in a camp, be the
18 enemy or maybe feel that way when in fact you are U.S.
19 citizens. On a personal level, did you feel like an
20 enemy or did you feel like you were being, some people
21 have said that they felt like they were being protected
22 from the outside. Others didn't feel that way.

23 GROUP: Well when I was all mad and everything else I used to
24 write to my brother, he was in the army and he said
25 just hold on, we are trying to prove a point here, that
26 is why we are working hard on it. So you know I guess
27 they did prove it because our parents got their
28 citizenship after that.

29 I think all the Niseaⁱⁱ, Niseas are our generation, the
30 ~~Eseas~~ ^{Nisei} are our mother and father's generation. Well the
31 Nisea really sacrificed a lot. They were good
32 Americans and they proved it beyond their duties you
33 know and I think they were the most decorated group in
34 the army. So because of their strong feelings to be a
35 good citizen I think they were better than the average
36 soldier. They had something to prove. Most people

1 just go and do their duties, but because we were in
2 camp and whatever they did on the outside all came back
3 to us in camp. If they were good soldiers why you know
4 it just makes our reputation better.

5 SM: In camp. So it really affected you?

6 GROUP: Of course, everything that affected the soldiers
7 outside affected us inside so that made it real nice.

8 My brother was called in Dec. 1st or something like
9 that and he could have gotten out of it because they
10 were farming, but he insisted that he would go so on
11 Dec. 31st of 1941 he got inducted. Right after Pearl
12 Harbor and he was in Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas.
13 They didn't know what to do with him. You know the
14 army, they were scared so he volunteered to go to
15 Europe. They had to volunteer, join the Hawaiian
16 group. And he said when they went to Germany or
17 something they didn't know whether he was from Japan or
18 what.

*so the
soldiers
did make
a difference*

19 That was just because of the features. !

20 SM: So the young men in the military were trying to prove
21 their loyalty and you were too inside the camp and what
22 how they performed you felt like made a difference in
23 the way you were treated?

24 GROUP: Afterwards

25 Yes

26 SM: Afterwards? Oh not during the camp.

27 GROUP: In camp it was a safety factor because we were all
28 there together but when we go out and if the newspaper
29 gives enough publicity about how well our soldiers, I
30 mean when I am talking about our soldiers I am talking
31 about the Japanese soldiers that were inducted from the
32 camp, did well, they were a highly decorated group and
33 so all of that publicity made those really understand
34 that we were loyal American citizens.

35 SM: So then when you came out did you, tell me about when
36 you came out and went home, what it was like for you.
37 Where did you go and how did people treat you when you
came out?

1 GROUP: Well it wasn't very good. We were running a grocery
2 store and this Chinese couple, they were school
3 teachers and so we thought oh they didn't have much
4 money and so we told them just take it over when you
5 get enough money pay your rent, you know. But when we
6 came back ah, what do you call that, you couldn't
7 operate any more.

8 What do you mean, who can't operate?

9 We can't.

10 Why?

11 Because, oh condemned. They had it condemned.

12 After all those years that you were in camp and they
13 made a good livelihood?

14 Made a lot of money.

15 And what did they condemn, the property?

16 Yeah so we couldn't operate.

17 Did he open a store nearby you?

18 And then he went and bought a store about a block away.

19 Oh that was ...

20 Yeah he did that purposely. But we built another store
21 at another location we did our business and this
22 Chinese fellow I don't think he did it a year and he
23 had to give it up.

24 Oh he didn't have enough business?

25 And so my husband said see, at least we eat three meals
26 a day and look at him. See what happened.

27 SM: But you really had to start all over again.

28 GROUP: Oh yes.

29 Those who had property were well off or they had
30 someone look after their property, so they had
31 something. But most of us like my husband and me we
32 just started so we didn't have anything.

*post-war
Ethnic tension*

1 My family on my side we had one house you know, so he
2 had, we are Catholics, and he had the Catholic priest
3 come and watch the house and he had a real good Jewish
4 friend, my brother, and he lived in the back house and
5 he took care of the front house and in the front house
6 we brought all our furniture what we had instead of
7 selling it we all brought it to his house and my
8 brother boarded up the whole house and then this Jewish
9 fellow lived in the back and he took care of watching
10 it. And my brothers were in Posten which is near so
11 the priest would go to the house and whatever he wanted
12 he would take it out and bring it to him. My furniture
13 and everything was ok except the rug.

14 SM: So you were a little bit more fortunate than a lot of
15 people weren't you?

16 GROUP: At least when we came home we had something to sleep
17 on, we had a bed and, you know. So we were really
18 fortunate.

19 SM: Have you, I am just kind of curious because I went over
20 to the museum just briefly before I came here, but have
21 you all been through the barracks display? The Heart
22 Mountain display?

23 GROUP: I didn't go there, but I went into the museum.

24 SM: Well I noticed that there is a barrack from Heart
25 Mountain, I wondered if you, you know, what that is
26 like to see that just sitting right in downtown Los
27 Angeles.

28 GROUP: It's too bad it is not going to be a permanent fixture
29 there you know, because it is such an authentic
30 barrack. That is really what it was.

31 SM: I don't know I thought it was with this exhibit. I
32 know they dismantled it at Heart Mountain and brought
33 it here.

34 GROUP: You know it happened to be somebody we knew I think.
35 You know it's kept up pretty well because in Wyoming
36 they say they don't have no termites because it is so
37 cold.

38 SM: I think that is true.

1 GROUP: Yeah and that is why it has held up so well.
2 I guess so.
3 Just think of cold like that here.
4 You live in Wyoming?
5 SM: I live in Wyoming.
6 GROUP: Oh really, Cody or?
7 Laramie she lives in Laramie.
8 SM: I live in Laramie.
9 GROUP: Laramie, that's a big town isn't it?
10 SM: Well it's about 25,000, probably not huge.
11 GROUP: A large town.
12 SM: It's a large town for Wyoming.
13 GROUP: Did you see Heart Mountain, did you go back there?
14 Oh yes, I've been back there.
15 Did you, I just went one time.
16 SM: What was that like going back and seeing that?
17 GROUP: I took my grandkids, some of my grandkids went with, I
18 mean I went with the grandkids and their parents drove.
19 We drove to Yellowstone so that on the way back we
20 stopped. My grandkids "grandma you tell me you lived
21 in this thing?" It was one barracks there and just
22 nothing grows there or anything. It is just barren to
23 this day it is barren. There was one barrack they had
24 barbed wire and things stored in there. That is what
25 we saw and then we saw the cemetery. But it was
26 something that I am glad they saw.
27 SM: You know I noticed they this American concentration
28 camps and more recently people have used the term
29 concentration camps instead of relocation camps. What
30 do you think about that? Because I think the
31 government has been very careful to call them
32 relocation camps. Concentration camp is a different

Use this discussion!

"concentration" camps

1 idea.

2 GROUP: Well concentration camp has a stronger connotation
3 because in Europe where all the Jewish people were
4 concentrated in their camp those people got executed so
5 it is a harsher word to use. So I think the government
6 is just trying to soften it by saying relocation.

7 SM: Do you think they were concentration camps?

8 GROUP: Well, I mean our privileges were gone and we couldn't
9 do anything what we wanted to do so it is a
10 concentration but not in the sense like the European
11 concentration camp. But they wanted most of us to
12 relocate but most of us were afraid to relocate. And
13 most of them like her, she had property why should she
14 relocate when she...

15 SM: Oh when you left the camp you are talking about now,
16 relocate somewhere else.

17 GROUP: Yeah uhuh, so those who had property has someplace to
18 come back to but those who did not have property well
19 we didn't know where to go.

20 I hear people back east never knew about this camp
21 thing, is that correct?

22 Did you people know? Well you were in Wyoming so...

23 She was in Laramie so she would know the camp...

24 Well she was a baby.

25 She wasn't even born.

26 SM: I was born in 1942 so I was living in Los Angeles about
27 a month before you were all boarding the trains to go
28 to Heart Mountain. But actually it is interesting. I
29 asked one of the classes I teach, in particular I asked
30 the students and most of them are from Wyoming, how
31 many know about Heart Mountain and usually maybe about
32 20 or 25% They are horrified when they hear about it.
33 But these are college students and they don't know
34 anything about it. They have grown up for the most
35 part in Wyoming, so I would say the knowledge about the
36 camps is not great. Probably more in the last year or
37 so because there has been more publicity with the 50
38 years since the camps were...

"we tread softly"

1 GROUP: Anniversary and Reagan signing the...

2 SM: Did you feel when you relocated that people were pretty
3 welcoming of you or did you feel they were still
4 prejudice and racial feeling?

5 GROUP: I think that we didn't feel that freedom that we had
6 expected. We held back because we didn't know what to
7 expect.

8 SM: So how did you hold back?

9 GROUP: We tread softly.

10 You know those stamps we got when we came out. Was
11 that for everybody or was that just for those who came
12 out?

13 Oh you mean to buy food. *ration stamps*

14 Yeah

15 No everybody had them.

16 During the wartime everybody had them for sugar and...

17 But they stopped that right after the war was finished.

18 Because when we first went out the milkman would not
19 leave milk for us so we had to go buy it.

20 Maybe they were afraid. Thinking we were out of camp
21 and we didn't have money to pay for it.

22 You know I bet the way we felt after we came out of the
23 camp, that's how the black people must have felt all
24 the time, you know, scared. *interesting*

25 Well I went to see an attorney and I got into the
26 elevator and this man took me way down to the basement.
27 He said this is where you belong.

28 You mean the elevator man?

29 The elevator man. I was so scared I just, you know.
30 And I was only about 25 or 26 you know I was so scared.

 Why didn't you fight him.

"That's a Nisei, you're scared"
afraid - out of camp

GROUP INTERVIEW

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- 1 Well that's a Nisei, your scared. You are so scared.
- 2 And I think he was a Jewish man.
- 3 You should have reported him. He had no business
- 4 treating you like that.
- 5 I was so scared.
- 6 Well what did you do get back on another one and go up?
- 7 Then he took me up to where I was supposed to go to see
- 8 Ohoura. You know in those days I was the oldest
- 9 citizen in our family so I had my cousin's ranch in my
- 10 name, my parents in my name because I am the only one
- 11 so I had to go because of that and when I was in Santa
- 12 Anita two FBI's came to take me to San Diego and I had
- 13 to go by myself and the two FBI's were there and they
- 14 put me in a hotel room. I couldn't get out I couldn't
- 15 do anything just stay in the hotel room.
- 16 That was scarry wasn't it. Because you knew you
- 17 weren't supposed to be out there.
- 18 SM: It sounds like being afraid was the predominant
- 19 emotion.
- 20 GROUP: It was. We didn't know what to expect that was the
- 21 main thing. When you don't know what to expect you are
- 22 always afraid.
- 23 SM: Did you have any sense that there might be some bad
- 24 outcome. I mean we are talking about concentration
- 25 camps and obviously the ones in Europe, there were
- 26 extraordinarily bad outcomes for the people in them.
- 27 Did you ever feel like something bad might happen to
- 28 you or you might be hurt?
- 29 GROUP: Oh yes all the time. We were careful what our
- 30 neighbors might see or do. You know they make up
- 31 stories and I remember when applying for a job when I
- 32 first came out. I went to the Bullocks the first thing
- 33 to see if I could find a job there and they said "well,
- 34 we may have a stock girl position but there is no
- 35 opening now."
- 36 SM: So you are talking about when you were out of the camp
- you were fearful. What about in the camp?

before
reloc?

out of
camp

"In the camp we weren't scared,
we had all the others"

GROUP INTERVIEW

Soldiers & guns @ S.A

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early on - no radios/cameras

- 1 GROUP: Oh well no, in the camp we weren't scared. We had all
2 the others.
- 3 Well remember in Santa Anita when the soldiers came
4 with a gun like this?
- 5 SM: You talking about the guard towers?
- 6 GROUP: No, no, no, no. Do you remember when they came between
7 the barracks?
- 8 Oh yes.
- 9 SM: Tell me about that. What happened?
- 10 GROUP: I don't remember too much about it I was so scared,
11 what are they going to do to us.
- 12 Well anyway there was some kind of an uprising
13 somewhere I don't know where, not in around where we
14 were though. But they came around to show they were
15 the boss you know. We mean business you know and they
16 came marching down.
- 17 SM: Made a big impression.
- 18 GROUP: I think they were looking for radios and things like
19 that.
- 20 You know when we came in they checked us so thoroughly.
21 Nobody had a radio.
- 22 SM: You didn't have radios?
- 23 GROUP: No we couldn't take anything like that. Had luxury
24 items confiscated. Cameras, radios. It was much later
25 on that we were allowed. So when a GI would come in we
26 would have them take our pictures, remember?
- 27 Yeah. I think that is one of the things we missed out,
28 baby pictures and our everyday life because we weren't
29 allowed a camera.
- 30 SM: Do some of you have photos? I have been collecting
31 some from the camps. It is surprising how many
32 pictures I have seen in spite of that. You know,
33 friends would come in or relatives would have a camera.
- 34 GROUP: The only time that we had the pictures taken when she

We don't talk about it

GROUP INTERVIEW

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1 was a baby or...

2 But you know when my brother came to Santa Anita they
3 wouldn't let him in. I had to go way to the gate to
4 meet him. But later on when we went to Heart Mountain
5 we saw soldiers come in huh?

6 To visit their families.

7 SM: I really appreciate this discussion because it is
8 really interesting to have you talking with each other.

9 GROUP: Otherwise if we were by ourselves all of this won't
10 come out.

11 SM: Have you talked with any one else about Heart Mountain
12 recently or is this something you don't do very often?

13 GROUP: I have not heard of most of this before.

14 We just don't talk about it.

15 SM: Why is that?

16 GROUP: It is unpleasant.

17 SM: I mean it was such an important time in your life.

18 GROUP: Yes when we had our youth and we should be having a
19 good time.

20 Yeah, yeah, right.

21 SM: One of the things I have been asking everyone is if you
22 think your being in Heart Mountain or being in a camp
23 like that affected you as a person. Did it affect your
24 life and the way you live your life? Did it change
25 you?



26 GROUP: Oh it set us back for sure. But it is a good thing our
27 children were small yet, you know.

28 That's right, they don't remember.

29 But people that had teenagers and stuff, I think they
30 suffered a lot.

1 SM: The teenagers did do you think?

lots of contradictions

- 1 GROUP: I think so.
- 2 SM: Why was that?
- 3 GROUP: Because they couldn't go out or anything and they
4 missed out on the good times.
- 5 SM: You know that is interesting because I have heard just
6 the opposite. Probably not from the interviews but
7 just talking to people, that the teenagers actually had
8 a good time because they the high school and they had
9 dances and they had all kinds of activities and it was
10 a pretty carefree time for them.
- 11 GROUP: Well they knew no other joy of living. They just
12 thought that what they had was wonderful, going dancing
13 and... 
- 14 SM: In a lot of ways you know, you were just a few older
15 than these teenagers and not very much older and you
16 were washing sheets and washing diapers and getting
17 cold and...
- 18 GROUP: That is because we were married.
- 19 SM: Kept husbands and, I mean you are talking about maybe 5
20 to 8 years difference in ages and you had radically
21 different lives.
- 22 GROUP: Well in those days 8 years made a lot of difference
23 between old or young. 
- 24 SM: Well thank you. I am going to turn this off right now
25 and I think you might like to have your lunch. But I
26 may turn it back on during lunch if you don't mind if
27 something comes up.