

**The David and Barbara Pryor Center
for
Arkansas Oral and Visual History**

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Arkansas Memories Project

George Takei
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
October 18, 2014
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Objective

Oral history is a collection of an individual's memories and opinions. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using these interviews should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center Web site at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu>. The Pryor Center recommends that researchers utilize the audio recordings and highlight clips, in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. For the first twenty minutes of the interview, we attempt to transcribe verbatim all words and utterances that are spoken, such as uhs and ahs, false starts, and repetitions. Some of these elements are omitted after the first twenty minutes to improve readability.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Double underscores indicate two people talking at the same time.
- Italics identify foreign words or terms and words emphasized by the speaker.
- Question marks enclose proper nouns for which we cannot verify the spelling and words that we cannot understand with certainty.

- Brackets enclose
 - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing;
 - annotations for clarification and identification; and
 - standard English spelling of informal words.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.
- All geographic locations mentioned in the transcript are in the state of Arkansas unless otherwise indicated.

Citation Information

See the Citation Guide at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.php>

**Scott Lunsford interviewed George Takei on October 18, 2014,
at the Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: George, thank you so much for agreeing to be with us here at the Pryor Center—uh . . .

George Takei: It's my pleasure.

SL: . . . uh—I'm gonna take care of a little business here. I've got to say that today's date is October 18.

GT: I think it's . . .

SL: That's correct, isn't it? October 18?

GT: Is it . . .

Brad Takei: Yes.

GT: . . . is it the eighteenth?

SL: And we're in Hot Springs, Arkansas, at the Arlington Hotel. And my name is Scott Lunsford, and you're George Takei. And—um—we're here with the Pryor Center doing an oral and visual history with you. We'll record this to high-definition video and audio. [GT clears throat] You will get the raw footage of every inch of this—uh—for your review. We will send you a transcript. It'll take longer. Transcription is a little bit—uh—more time consuming, and we do it verbatim. Uh—we believe in accuracy as to what was said. Um—and we'll ask you to look at that stuff.

And if you're happy with it, we'll proceed with further processing.
Um—if there are any changes that you would like, we do them
for you. And . . .

GT: Well, thank you.

SL: . . . if you are comfortable with that, we'll just keep recording
and keep going, and we'll start this thing.

GT: I'm very comfortable. Thanks.

[00:01:09] SL: All right. Thank you so much. George—uh—we
usually start with when and where you were born.

GT: I was born in Los Angeles, California, in—uh—1937. April 20,
1937, a birthday that I happen to share with one of history's
blackest villains, Adolf Hitler.

SL: Oh my gosh! [*Laughter*] Oh! [*Laughter*]

GT: So I have to be particularly good [*SL laughs*] to make up for
that. [*Laughs*]

SL: Golly! I guess that—does that make y'all the same zodiac sign
and all those . . .

GT: All the same.

SL: Oh my god. [*Laughter*]

GT: I've told my mother often—uh—well, she's gone now—but
"Couldn't you have held me just twenty-four hours [*SL laughs*]
longer or pushed me out a little bit" . . .

SL: Little early.

GT: . . . "prematurely?" [*Laughs*]

[00:01:59] SL: That's fun. That's funny. [*GT clears throat*] Well, okay—uh—speaking of your mother, we usually want to know something about your parents. And—and what was your mother's name?

GT: My mother's name was Fumiko Emily Nakamura.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: She was born in Florin, California, which today is a part of Sacramento. Uh—my—uh—grandparents were in farming in the outskirts of—uh—Sacramento then . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . in a community called Florin. Uh—and—uh—her birthday—uh—is—was in June but I don't remember what year or [*laughs*] . . .

[00:02:38] SL: Um—did you know her parents?

GT: Oh no, she was born in 1912. That's right. Nineteen twelve.

SL: Did—did you know her parents?

GT: I knew my grandmother. Um—my grandparents—uh—have an interesting story, too.

SL: Okay.

GT: Uh—they came from—uh—Hiroshima, Japan—uh—as immigrants

and—uh—they—my—my grandfather was a farmer . . .

SL: Oh.

GT: . . . uh—farming there.

SL: Yes, sir.

[00:03:09] GT: But—uh—they sensed the winds of war coming, and so—uh—they left with—uh—their younger—uh—children and—uh—went back to Hiroshima . . .

SL: Oh!

GT: . . . of all places.

SL: Yes.

GT: Uh—and—um—uh—then, subsequent to that, I was born—uh—and—uh—uh—I knew my grandmother only—uh—from after the war when she came to visit us.

SL: So she survived.

GT: She survived the bombing.

SL: Oh!

GT: Yes. Uh—my—uh—my grandfather was fairly successful—in—in those—uh—uh—in—in the—uh—circumstances that they were in. Uh—so they were able to build a home—um—uh—some distance from downtown.

SL: The epicenter. Uh-huh.

GT: And—uh—and so, the house collapsed, but they survived. But—

um—my mother's younger sister, my aunt, who I never met—
uh—happened to be—uh—shopping in downtown—uh—Hiroshima
with her—uh—son, five years old. We thought he was an
infant—uh—because we didn't know until—I didn't know until—
uh—earlier this year when we were . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . there visiting with my—uh—cousin. And he told me then
that—uh—the—the—uh—person that I thought was a baby was
actually five years old.

SL: Five years old.

GT: So—uh—at—my mother, I think, passed thinking that—uh—her
nephew . . .

SL: Mmm.

GT: . . . was . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . a baby—uh—which I just found out—uh—this year.

[00:04:51] SL: And what about her father? Did her father survive
the—the bomb?

GT: My grandfather?

SL: Your grandfather.

GT: My—uh—he—he survived, also.

SL: Okay.

GT: Uh—but—uh—he passed—uh—shortly after the war.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:05:06] GT: And—um—then—um—my grandmother came to visit us. I think I was probably in my preteens, and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . uh—she stayed with us. Uh—my grandmother lived to 104 years old.

SL: Oh.

GT: And she used to tell—tell me about—uh—her first trip across—uh . . .

SL: The Pacific.

GT: . . . the Pacific.

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: Uh—it was something like a month of being [*SL laughs*] rocked . . .

SL: Oh god.

GT: . . . on that boat. And—uh—in the latter part of her life, she was going back and forth in a—in a matter of hours. Well, I mean, like, what is it? Uh . . .

SL: Eight hours.

GT: . . . thirteen or fourteen . . .

SL: Ten hour . . .

GT: . . . hours.

SL: Yeah, yeah, uh-huh.

GT: But nevertheless, more than—uh—a month—uh—less—uh—
much less than a month—uh—going back and forth.

SL: So she—she saw a lot in her life.

GT: She saw a lot, not only in terms of—uh—the ex—uh—extent of
her 104 years, but the times that she lived in. War and peace—
uh—technological advances . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . jet pl—uh—planes. She lived through an amazing period
of—uh—of our history.

[00:06:21] SL: You know, we're always looking for the oldest story.

Um—do you—do you remember any of her stories of her growing
up when she was young? Did she relate any experiences? I
guess they—they would've been farm experiences. Uh . . .

GT: Uh—you know, frankly, I didn't hear too many of those . . .

SL: Okay.

GT: . . . stories. Um—I'm—it was only, you know, vi—on visits when
she stayed with us.

SL: Uh-huh. Mh-hmm.

GT: Uh—I think the longest stay—uh—she had—uh—with us was
about a month.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: So—um—we took her out and, you know, drove her . . .

SL: Showed her . . .

GT: . . . Los Angeles . . .

SL: . . . California. Uh-huh.

GT: . . . and showed her the sights and so forth. But I never did ask her too much about her childhood. She was . . .

SL: Well, a teenager . . .

GT: . . . born ?a Namba?.

SL: . . . probably wouldn't be thinking in those terms but . . .

GT: We wanted to show—show off our . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: . . . our city to—uh—our grandmother.

[00:07:16] SL: All right. So now let's [*GT coughs*]*—uh—what about your father? What was your father's name?*

GT: My father's name was Takekuma Norman, which he gave himself, Takei. He was born in Japan . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . uh—quite unlike my mother . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . uh—uh—in Yamanishi—ju—uh—bru—prefecture at the foot of Mount Fuji.

SL: Nice.

GT: But—uh—he—uh—his—he lost his mother when he was—uh—a child. He was, I—I think, about six or seven.

SL: Hmm.

GT: And when he was about—uh—nine or ten, my grandfather—uh—a widower, brought his two boys—uh—uh—the older boy and the younger, who was my father—who became my father—uh—and came to San Francisco. And—uh [*clears throat*]*—he was a journalist, and he was—uh . . .*

SL: Wow.

GT: . . . uh—uh—a—um—journalist with the—uh—Japanese language paper in San Francisco. And so, my father, who was born in Japan—uh—wa—was reared and educated in—uh—San Francisco and felt very American.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: Uh—he spoke both—uh—English and Japanese fluently, and—uh—uh—uh—he was a bibliophile, and he read a lot. And—uh—he knew a lot about American democracy—um—way before he was jolted into another understanding of our democracy.

[00:08:46] SL: Yes, yes. Um—well, did you get [*GT clears throat*] to meet his father, your grandfather on your dad's side? Did you ever get to . . .

GT: Uh—he passed before . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: . . . I was born.

SL: Okay.

GT: So I never did meet him.

[00:08:57] SL: And—and what about your—your father's brother,
who would be your uncle. Did you . . .

GT: Yes. Uh—I knew my uncle well.

SL: Okay.

GT: Uh—he—um—had—uh—a family—uh—here in the United States,
as well, in Los Angeles. His children were all born here. But he
also sensed the winds of war . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . and he sent all of his family—uh—he had—uh—three boys
and a—a—a—a girl, a daughter, and his—his wife to—back to
Japan before Pearl Harbor. But he stayed.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: And—uh—when internment came—um—because he was single—
uh—he was able to up and leave at the—they—the—uh—border
was—uh—the California border and part of—uh—Arizona—the
western Arizona—at—all the way up to—uh—Canada. And s—
they—uh—the government said if you—um—moved east of the

Rockies, then you were—uh—not—uh—you didn't have to be in—
uh—interned.

SL: Gosh.

GT: And so, he fled to—uh—Salt Lake City.

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: And—uh—he spent the—the—uh—war years there in Salt Lake
City.

[00:10:21] SL: Uh-huh. Did he face any sort of racial reprisals there
in Salt Lake City, or it was—or did he ever tell you about any of
that?

GT: You know, he didn't. Uh—he didn't like to talk about that
period . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

GT: . . . of his life.

SL: Yeah.

GT: Uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . and—uh—you know, he—he—um—visited with us, but—uh—
he didn't live with us. [00:10:43] However—uh—after the war,
he—uh—called for his children one by one, and—uh—his—uh—
youngest son, Tony—uh—came back first. And because he was
living in a—a—a one-room hotel room in downtown

Los Angeles . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: . . . uh—Tony stayed with us.

SL: Okay.

GT: And he lived with us for about—uh—six months.

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: And then he got a job—um—as—but the term was houseboy.

He—um—lived with—a—a very affluent doctor . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . uh—and—uh—took care of, you know, like washing the car or washing the window, but he was able to go to school—uh—and was paid—a—a small stipend. And that's how—and he became a doctor—ear, nose, and throat—uh—specialist—uh . . .

SL: What a great story.

GT: . . . it was many good people like that doctor who—uh—helped—um—the Japanese Americans at a very—uh—distressed time.

[00:11:49] SL: You—you know—uh—I read—I've been reading your book, and—um—uh—it seems as though it's dedicated to your father? I—I noticed "To Daddy" page. And—um—so I just wondered—uh—what is your earliest memory of your father?

GT: My father had a cleaner's shop . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . uh—in—um—the Wil—Wilshire District of . . .

SL: Mmm.

GT: . . . uh—Los Angeles, right behind—if you know Los Angeles . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . the Bullock's Wilshire on Wilshire Boulevard . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . a very posh—uh—department store

SL: Yes, yes.

GT: . . . at that time.

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: It was on Seventh Street right behind—uh—Bullock's Wilshire.
[00:12:30] And—um—uh—uh—I remember he used to take us
on drives—uh—and you know, I was an infant then.

SL: Uh—of course.

GT: Um—and—uh—I—I just loved my daddy then—back—from way
back then.

SL: Well, I can tell you just—uh—the first few chapters in the book,
you can't help but fall in love with your father. I mean . . .

GT: I what?

SL: You can't help but fall—the reader cannot help but fall in love
with your father—uh—because he seemed to be so—he seemed
to always step up to help the—the Japanese community in these

dire situations. And they all turned to him, and so, I—I just had the sense that—um—he just must've been wonderful to live with and—because he seemed to always put his family first.



GT: He was a very loving father. Um—we—he—um—well, I remember he always, you know, was taking us to various places.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: Um—he—um—he—uh—and he worked—uh—worked very hard. Uh—it was a cleaner's shop.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: My father—uh—uh—studied business. He went to business college.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: But—um—uh—the only way he could—uh—be a businessman was to start his own entrepreneurial business—uh—which happened to be clean—uh—a dry cleaning—uh—store. And—uh—so he was busy during the day, but—uh—when he was—uh—home, he was—uh—always a loving daddy.

[00:14:11] SL: Let's talk a little bit—well, I wanna go back to your mother now. Um—was she—um—basically a homemaker while your father did the business? I know that she had a—a sew—a portable sewing machine. Um—so was—she must've been a seamstress, and I wonder—did she do alterations with the—the

dry cleaning place?

GT: She did.

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: She—um—she did the sewing part, and she helped out, you know, wherever necessary—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . dealing with the customers, or—uh—um—uh—she hung the clothes up on the rack and things like that. She was there with my father.

SL: I—uh—got the feeling that she—she had some independence about her and about how she felt about things and the way she looked at stuff. It was—you know, wasn't just lockstep with whatever was around her or whoever was around her or even her husband. She [*GT laughs*] kinda held her own ground. Is that . . .



GT: She was a strong lady. [*Laughs*]

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: A tough lady.

SL: Mh-hmm

GT: Um—she had—uh—views of her own. [*Laughter*] And—and then sometimes there was friction between [*laughs*] my parents. She was giving my [*laughs*] father a lot of orders. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, that's not unusual [*laughter*] among any marriage.
[00:15:26] Well—um—so what is your earliest memory of your mother?

GT: Um—well, maybe it—this is influenced by what she told me.

SL: Okay. [*Laughs*]

GT: But—um—she said I loved teasing her and—and [*SL laughs*]
running away from her . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . with—in—in my diapers. [*Laughter*] And she s—and I—she used to tell me, you know, with only my diapers on [*laughs*], she would go running down Seventh s—I would go running down Seventh Street, and she'd have to—uh—chase me down.
[*Laughs*]

[00:15:58] SL: Oh, the chase. You loved the chase. It came early. I—uh—well, that's fun. [*GT laughs*] That's fun. Well—um—I—I think we do need to eventually kinda tie us into Arkansas here, and—um—uh—the—the first chapter starts with you on a train. Now, before the—were you much aware of what happened before the train ride? I mean, did people just—did authorities just come in and shut down the dry clean—the cleaning shop and just take—haul you guys away? How—how did that happen?



GT: That's one morning I'll never forget.

SL: M'kay.

GT: Um—my parents got us up very early . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . that morning. Uh—my brother, Henry, who was a year . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . younger and my—uh—baby sister, who was a baby then—
uh . . .

SL: Now, we need her name.

GT: Oh—uh—Nancy Reiko.

SL: Reiko.

GT: Yes.

SL: Okay.

GT: And—uh—uh—my brother and I were in the living room—uh—
looking out the front window.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:17:06] GT: And we saw two soldiers marching up our driveway—
uh—and I remember the flashing—the sunlight flashing on their
bayonets. They stomped up the . . .

SL: They had bayonets on.

GT: They had bayonets on, and—um—they stomped up the front
porch, banged on the door. My father answered it, and literally
at gunpoint, we were ordered out of our home. My father had—

uh—small pieces of luggage for my brother and me to carry, and we went out, and we stood on the—uh—driveway, waiting for my mother to come out. And—uh—when she finally emerged from the house, she had the baby in one arm, a great big, huge duffel bag in the other, and tears were streaming down her cheek. It was a terrifying morn—uh—morning for us. Uh—for me. And we were put on a truck—uh—with other Japanese American families—um—that they had gathered. [00:18:10] And they took us to—uh—Santa Anita racetrack.

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: Um—a—uh . . .

SL: I know where that is. Uh-huh.

GT: Oh, you're—you're familiar with . . .

SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

GT: . . . where that is in—uh—in—um—oh, what's that—not Artesia—um—well, I can't . . .

SL: I—I—I have a—um—uh—a brother-in-law that lives in that neighborhood in—uh—today. I—I know . . .

GT: And we were herded over to the—uh—stable area, and we were told that—uh—our whole family, all five of us, were to—uh—stay in the horse stall. Uh—for my . . .

SL: Wow!

GT: . . . parents it was a degrading, humiliating—uh—anguishing
mome—uh—moment. But the memory I have is "We get to
sleep where the horsies sleep." [*Laughter*]

SL: It was an adventure at . . .

GT: It . . .

SL: . . . that point.

GT: . . . it was—you know, "If I breathe deeply I could smell the
horsies." [*Laughter*] And so, my understanding of that period is
purely that of a—a child. Uh—I remembered how terrifying that
morning was, but—uh—uh—this was just an adjustment that we
had to make. And—uh—we were there for a few months while
the camps were being built.

[00:19:29] SL: A few months. So—um—before we—before we get
you to Arkansas, can—do you remember much about the house
that—uh—there in Wilshire that you grew up in? Is it . . .

GT: Well, actu—the—the—when I was born—uh—we lived in a small
apartment behind the—uh . . .

SL: Oh.

GT: . . . the—uh—store—shop . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: . . . there.

SL: Uh-huh.

GT: But—uh—then—uh—we moved to a house . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

GT: . . . um—uh—in East LA on Garnet Street.

SL: Okay.

GT: A two-bedroom house with a backyard and a front yard and a driveway. And—and—uh—that's where—uh—the hor—the—uh—soldiers came to pick us up—uh—pick us up.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:08] SL: That's all the markings of a successful businessman in a thriving community and family. So this would be early [19]40s that we're talking about now.

GT: [Nineteen] forty-two.

SL: [Nineteen forty] two.

GT: Pearl Harbor was 1941. December 7 of 1941. And it was May of 1942. I celebrated my fifth birthday, and it was a few weeks after my birthday that the soldiers came.

[00:20:47] SL: Do you remember—did y'all have a telephone in the house? Do you member that?

GT: You know, I don't. I don't remember . . .

SL: I all—I'm always curious about the technology that people witness over their lifespan and . . .

GT: Yeah, I—no, I don't remember that.

SL: Or . . .

GT: That's interesting.

SL: . . . a radio? Did—do you remember . . .

GT: Oh, we had a radio, but I can—you know, I—now that you ask, I don't—I—know whether we had a pho—a telephone or not.

[00:21:15] SL: Well, I'm certain that in that community there was pavement, and there was running water . . .

GT: Oh yes.

SL: . . . and . . .

GT: Yes.

SL: . . . and wh—and I would assume . . .

GT: Oh, we had a sidewalk. [*Laughs*]

SL: Sidewalk. I mean . . .

GT: The house was on a slight hill—hillside, and so, our front yard was elevated. What—here is the driveway, and the sidewalk went down this way, so there was a little embankment for part of our front yard and in the backyard, too. It was kind of on two levels. There was a few steps going to the lower level of our backyard and then the upper level of our backyard.

[00:21:59] SL: And did your [*GT clears throat*] family have a—an automobile?

GT: Oh yes. My father took us out on drives.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

GT: That was his favorite thing.

SL: And let's see. What about—well, you were so young then you probably—do you remember . . .



GT: Oh, I have memories. The—here was the garage and behind the garage—when we moved in there—the previous owner had kept chickens there.

SL: Okay.

GT: But my uncle, my father's older brother, gave us two bunnies for Easter [*SL laughs*], and so, the bunnies lived in the chicken . . .

SL: Coop.

GT: . . . area. And we fed them there, and [*laughs*] they grew up to be big, white rabbits.

[00:22:58] SL: [*Laughs*] You know, in Arkansas in that time there were still places that—homes that did not have running water or . . .

GT: Yes, I know.

SL: . . . electricity and all that, so it's kind of a—I just want to kinda contrast where [*laughs*] you and your family were coming from and where you landed when you got to Arkansas. So you were in a horse stall for three months? Is that . . .

GT: About three or four months, yes.

SL: My gosh!

GT: From a two-bedroom house with a front yard and backyard and a garage . . .

SL: And an automobile . . .

GT: . . . to—yeah.

SL: . . . and a successful, thriving business and . . .

GT: To a horse stall.

SL: . . . a proud family. Yeah.



[00:23:37] GT: Everything was gone. And I remember—and this

is—I got from my father when we had these after-dinner conversations when I was a teenager. I vaguely remembered a group of people milling around across the street from our home, and my father said they were vultures. They were people who were waiting for us to be taken away.

SL: Oh!

GT: And they—the minute we were taken away, they came in and took everything—furniture. My father sold his car for five dollars.

SL: Oh!

GT: Five dollars. He said it was better than leaving it there, which we would've had to do. And my mother's brand-new refrigerator for a dollar because at least it was a dollar. But everything else,

the sofa, the bed, everything, we had to leave.

[00:24:36] SL: Boy. And that was probably a refrigerator with a compressor, probably. It wasn't like an icebox. You don't ever remember them bringing blocks of . . .

GT: Oh yes. No, we had one of those after the war when we came back [*laughs*] to Los Angeles.

SL: Okay.

GT: But we had a refrigerator before the war, and my father said he accepted a dollar for it.

[00:25:00] SL: Golly! Well, what was the community like at the racetrack? Did your father step up there, too, and was conscious of . . .



GT: You know, I—my memory of the racetrack is very vague. One memory I have is I started kindergarten there. And it was underneath the grandstand . . .

SL: Okay.

GT: . . . of the racetrack. And my father took me there, and it was a group of children and—sitting on little stools or maybe it was on the concrete there, and the teacher was seated there and my father, who—and I didn't want my father to leave.

SL: Course not.

GT: And [*laughs*] . . .

SL: I was the same way. [*Laughter*]

GT: And I kept looking, and my father was there off in the distance. And he was always there, but then I looked, and he wasn't there. So I [*laughs*] ran to where I last saw him. I left the group, and the teacher's assistant came running after me, but then my father was hiding behind a pillar. [*SL laughs*] He was testing. [*Laughter*] And then he popped out.

SL: Oh gosh!

GT: He was—had thought maybe if I were so completely engaged with the class, he could go away, but [*laughs*] I wouldn't let him do that.

[00:26:34] SL: Golly. So I assume that more soldiers came and gathered all the families up and put 'em on trucks and . . .

GT: We were taken downtown to Union Sta—well, first to the Buddhist temple, which was the assembly point . . .

SL: Okay.

GT: . . . because Japanese Americans were in various other assembly areas. And we were assembled in front of the Buddhist temple there in downtown LA. Little Tokyo, as it happened to be. And then we were put on buses and taken to Union Station, the railway station. And I don't—my father says that we're taken the back way, straight to the tracks. And that's where we were

loaded. Because I fell in love with Union Station as a teenager.

It's a wonderful piece of . . .

SL: Oh, it's a beautiful place.

GT: . . . art deco-mission architecture.

SL: Yes, massive.

GT: And massive. And when we came back to Los Angeles, we arrived there, and we walked through that waiting area, which was an amazing sight. I was blown away, and I said, "Daddy, I've never seen that. Did—didn't we go—pass through there when we were taken away?" And he said, "No, we were not brought in from the station. We—the bus went to the rear of the station to the tracks, and we were loaded directly onto the train from there."

[00:28:06] SL: Were there any—was there any taunting or any concern about the Japanese safety in moving—I mean, the animosity toward Japan was so high and feverish, and wasn't the mayor of Los Angeles just a particularly awful . . .

GT: Fletcher Bowron.

SL: . . . guy?

GT: And you know about Earl Warren, his checkered history.

SL: Yes.

GT: He was attorney general of the state of California. He knew the

Constitution, but he was also ambitious. He wanted to be governor of California, and he saw that the single most popular political issue was the get rid of the Japs issue. So this attorney, attorney general, who knew better, ran on that issue, and one of the things that he said was, "The Japanese are inscrutable. You don't know what they're thinking. And up to this point, nothing has happened. So we better lock 'em up before they do anything." An attorney saying, "Lock people up because they haven't done anything." It was outrageous.

SL: Like preemptive strike.

GT: And [*SL laughs*] he won on that campaign—with that campaign and became the governor of the state of California. He was reelected for a second term, and he was reelected again for a third term. The only governor in—of California who served three terms.

SL: Three consecutive terms.

GT: Now we have a governor who may serve a third term, Jerry Brown.

SL: Right.

GT: And then he was appointed to be the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

[00:30:08] SL: Did he—in his tenure there, though, didn't he kind of

flip around and . . .

GT: He became a liberal . . .

SL: . . . became, yeah, he became . . .

GT: . . . Supreme Court chief justice.

SL: Probably out of guilt.

GT: *Brown v. the Board of Educa*—all these fine . . .

SL: Programs that . . .

GT: . . . rulings that upheld the core values of the United States and the United States Constitution. And I like to think that it's because of guilt.

SL: I believe that.

GT: He wanted to atone for what he did right before the Second World War.

SL: Yeah, I don't—really, there's—I don't know that one can ever atone for that. That degree and that—I mean, how many lives were . . .

GT: Ruined.

SL: Ruined. Shattered. That's . . .

[00:31:00] GT: The stronger ones were able to get back on their feet . . .

SL: And . . .

GT: . . . but there were so many people who were embittered by it

and became—you know, that victim mentality, which is so destructive. "I can't do that. I failed at that because of the internment. I didn't do that because of the internment," you know. It was a very destructive thing that happened.

SL: You know, of course, we—whenever we get an opportunity to interview a World War II veteran, we usually put them up at the top. First, they're pretty old, and those stories will go when they pass. And you know, there's that greatest generation patina about it.

GT: And I believe that.

SL: Yeah, I do too, but I was thinking as I was reading your book, your family is a family of veterans, World War [laughs] II veterans, in a completely different battlefield, a completely different location, but it was a war that was—because of the war, it was another battlefield that was suppressed and locked up. I mean . . .



[00:32:12] GT: And there's this other amazing story. Young Japanese Americans right a—immediately after Pearl Harbor, like all young Americans, rushed to their recruitment centers to volunteer to fight for this country. That act of patriotism was answered with a slap in the face. They were denied military service and categorized as enemy nonaliens. I mean, it's

outrageous to call people who are volunteering to fight for the country, possibly die for the country—for your country—to call them an enemy. It was outrageous. But that outrage was compounded by the word nonalien. What does that mean? [*SL laughs*] Nonalien. That's a citizen defined in the negative. They even took the word citizen away from us and locked up for a year. But then after a year, the government realized there's a wartime, manpower shortage, and here are all these pe—young people that we've called enemy nonaliens. How do we tap them? [00:33:28] And so, they came down with another outrage. A loyalty questionnaire. A loyalty questionnaire after they—they've taken everything from us. My father used to say, "They took my business. They took our home. They took our freedom. And they now want you to sign a loyalty questionnaire." It was a series of questions, but there was one stupid, sloppily put-together question . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] I know.

GT: . . . that was outrageous. One sentence with two opposite ideas. It essentially asked, "Will you swear your loyalty to the United States of America and foreswear your loyalty to the emperor of Japan." This being asked of an American citizen. For the government to assume that there is an existing, inborn, genetic

loyalty to the emperor simply because we looked like this was outrageous and insulting. And so, if you answered, "No, I don't have a loyalty to the emperor to foreswear," you were also saying no to the first part of the same sentence—"Will you swear your loyalty to the United States of America?" If you answered yes, meaning, "I do swear my loyalty to the United States of America," you were then fessing up that you had been loyal . . .

SL: Been loyal to the . . .

GT: . . . to the emperor and now were willing to set that aside and pledge your loyalty to the United States. It was a no-win question. [00:35:02] And the amazing thing is thousands of young Japanese American men and women answered yes to that question and went from behind those barbwire fences, leaving their family in imprisonment, to fight for this country. They were put into a segregated, all-Japanese American unit and sent to the battlefields of Europe. And they fought with astounding courage and valor. They sustained the highest combat casualty rate of any unit of its size, proportionately. And when the war ended, they came back the single most-decorated unit of the entire war. It's an amazing story and—but there's another stinging irony to this story. Those that perished on those bloody battlefields and had their coffins covered with the American

flag—those flags were brought back to their wives or their parents, still behind American barbwire fences. Can you imagine grieving over the loss of your husband or your son and then to be brought this flag that they died for that's also keeping you imprisonment?

[00:36:30] SL: Do you think the administrations, the presidential administrations—I mean, the—you know, starts under Roosevelt and then moves to Truman—was there a shift there in attitude, or was it just circumstance that—I mean . . .



GT: Well, the men of the 442nd were welcomed back by President Truman on the White House lawn, and he said to them, "You fought not only the enemy but prejudice, and you won." So yes, there was a distinct shift. In fact, those men of the 442nd changed the climate in this country . . .

SL: In America.

GT: . . . and made possible the America that I live in today.



SL: Yeah, I got the feeling that the—at least the presidency used that and proliferated that sort of news and that sort of coverage to ease the tensions and to try to fix what they had done. I mean, that's just kinda the impression I . . .

GT: Yes.

SL: . . . I got from reading.

[00:37:47] GT: There's another flip side to that—the story. There were other young men in the camp—the loyalty questionnaire had to be responded to by everyone over the age of seventeen. And there were other young men who said, "I'm an American, and I will fight for this country. But I will fight for this country as an American. I will fight if I can report to my hometown draft board with my family back in our homes. But I will not go as an internee, leaving my loved ones in imprisonment. Only on that condition will I serve."

SL: So that was a yes/no response.

[00:38:36] GT: Yes. And for that strong and courageous and principled position, and I consider them equally heroic, they were tried for draft evasion and found guilty and sent to federal penitentiaries, mostly to Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. And so, you know, there's—and that's the drama that we have turned into a musical called *Allegiance* . . .

SL: Okay.

GT: . . . which we opened in San Diego. Won the best musical award, and we broke box office records, and we are now Broadway bound.

SL: That's thrilling.

GT: We'll be opening next spring. Knock on wood.

SL: That's thrilling. All right, now, I know that we don't have much time.

TM: Scott, we need to do something, a little dusting, real quick, if we [unclear words].

SL: Okay. All right.

Unidentified female: Yeah.

SL: We're gonna pause . . .

[Tape stopped]

[00:39:31] SL: Okay, so we were starting to talk about . . .

GT: The trip to Arkansas.

SL: . . . the trip to Arkansas. And for a child of five years old, it's a big adventure. You're on this train that's going across the great American West. You're . . .

GT: My father told us that we were going for a long vacation in—to a place called Arkansas, which I had never heard of, and it sounded exotic to me. [Laughter]

SL: Well, it is, in a way, yeah.

GT: It is. [Laughter] It was totally different from California when we arrived here. [Laughs] And I really did see it as a great adventure. My parents, I think, didn't think we could understand the real circumstances of the politics, so they shielded us from the reality, literally. I mean, the train window had to be shaded

when we arrived—we went—passed through anyplace of any human population. It was mostly desert, and so, you know, they allowed us to lift the shade up but . . .

[00:40:48] SL: So they felt like—you all were actually being treated like toxic waste is today. They don't wanna let the communities know that this stuff is . . .

GT: Right.

SL: . . . going through town for, I guess, for fear that people would throw rocks at the train or . . .

GT: Right.

SL: . . . try to mess with the occupants in some way.

GT: That's right.

SL: That's interesting stuff. Yeah, I member you taking a peek at one point.

GT: Well, you know [*laughter*], there are sounds out there. And to a kid, a nosy kid like me, you know [*laughs*], it was awfully intriguing. And so, I pushed the shade up a little bit, and I saw things being carried on these trollies, you know, and a lot of activity. [00:41:39] And my brother, who was next to me, kinda snuggled beside me and then we—the train was moving very slowly, and there was a bench there with a lot of old black men sitting there. Now, I'd seen African Americans in Los

Angeles, but they were brown-looking African Americans. I'd never seen people that looked coal black. These were very, very black-looking black people, and they all looked very tired. And I remember seeing that blank, hopeless feeling, or maybe, you know, I'm reading into it now as an adult. But the same kind of feeling—the look that I saw on the old people's faces on the train, you know, the blankness of their eyes. And then [*laughs*] my mother saw us, and she slammed the [*laughs*] shade down on us.

[00:42:53] SL: Well, let's talk about the fo—the experience on the train. I assume that you would go for many, many hours and never stop. Is that right? And the seats were hard, wooden seats?

GT: Wooden seats.

SL: So were there guards in each car?

GT: There were guards at both ends of every car. And you know, they got bored, too.

SL: Yeah.

GT: And so, they would, you know, thump their rifles or their feet and kind of move around, which was understandable, you know.

[00:43:32] SL: Was there ever any interaction with the guards that was more relaxed and not as oppressive or—I mean, it would

seem like, after a while, just the human nature of people spending that much time together and kids—were the kids running up and down the aisles or . . .

GT: No, we were told to stay—my mother would not allow us [*laughs*] to move around. We were to stay seated. But I remember this one stop that we had. I guess it was in Arizona someplace. We were—the train came to a stop, and we were allowed to get out and walk around to get the kink out of our legs and just, you know, get some exercise. And that's when I remember one of the guards singing [*sings*] "Shoo, fly [*SL hums*], don't bother me. Shoo, fly, don't bother me. Shoo, fly, don't bother me, for I belong to Company C," or something like that . . .

SL: Right. Right.

GT: . . . you know. And he was the guard closest to us. I was seated facing this way, and he happened to be—and when we were allowed to go off for that walk, he was singing, and I remember that because they were all stoic. [00:44:54] No, there was very little communication between the guards and us. But for the first time, I heard him singing. [*Laughs*]

SL: So he . . .

GT: And . . .

SL: . . . became human for a moment.

GT: Yeah. And we were allowed to walk around, and then that same singing soldier helped us get back on because, you know, the steps were very high.

SL: Treacherous.

GT: And he was helping the women and particularly the older people up the stairs. And he, of course, had his rifle there [*laughs*], and I touched his rifle, and because he was out in the Arizona sun, it was . . .

SL: Oh, it was hot.

GT: . . . nice and hot and—"Oww!" [*Laughs*] And that—I realized, you know, that metal gets hot. [*Laughter*]

SL: You learned a lesson [*laughter*] on a rifle barrel. That's, usually, that's done on a stove. [*Laughter*] That's fu—that's strange.
[00:45:56] Well, what about the food on the train? What—how did y'all—how were you fed?

GT: My—we were given boxed meals, but my mother also had prepared her meals because [*laughs*] I don't think she trusted or she believed that there might be food on the train. So she somehow had gotten rice in—at Santa Anita. I don't know how—you know, I can't remember how she got that, but she made little rice balls with the sour plum . . .

SL: Seaweed.

GT: . . . wrapped in seaweed, but red sour plums in the middle, which was tasty. We loved that. And I remember eating those, but then they also had boxes with sandwiches, which were very dry—cheese, usually, with, you know, white bread.

SL: Right.

GT: And I didn't enjoy that, but I enjoyed my mother's [*laughs*] rice balls with the sour plum.

[00:47:05] SL: So how many days were you—was the train ride?

GT: My mother say four days and three nights.

SL: Uh-huh. And so, you end up in a place called Rohwer.

GT: Rohwer. *R-O-H-W-E-R*.

SL: In—and that's in southeastern Arkansas.

GT: Southeastern Arkansas. And what I remember from our arrival there were the guards all started shouting, "Rohwer! Rohwer!"

SL: "Rohwer!" [*Laughs*]

GT: And I heard that being shouted out in the other cars, as well. And you know, I thought, you know, they're saying, "Roar," you know, like a lion. I thought, "That's crazy. Why [*laughter*] are these soldiers roaring like lions?" But then later on I realized that's the name of the place that we had come to. Not Arkansas. It's Rohwer. [*Laughs*]

[00:47:54] SL: So was there a—an actual platform train station there?

GT: Oh, no.

SL: No.

GT: Oh, no, it—we—it was dirt. It was coming down.

SL: And was the track right next to the camp?

GT: The barbwire fence were right there. We rolled right alongside that barbwire fence, and there were people already who had arrived, and they were all standing there, you know, watching the train come in. And some would wave to us, and my mother recognized one of the ladies in the crowd of people that were there, a Mrs. Imai, a friend of hers who lived in North Hollywood. And I remember our family visiting on one of those Sunday drives. We went to the Imai family house in North Hollywood. And they had chickens behind their coop—I mean, behind their garage . . .

SL: The chicken coop behind their house.

GT: . . . just like—I mean, we didn't keep chickens, but it was just like ours. And I remember going to see their chicken there.

SL: Well, that had to be some comfort for your mother to see someone that she knew. I mean . . .

GT: That she recognized there, yes.

[00:49:09] SL: Uh-huh. Now—and so, describe the barracks. I mean, it was barracks, wasn't it?



GT: They were barracks, army barracks, with a tar-paper covering, and they were arranged in very military style, and the mess hall was in the middle. It was a block like this and about a dozen barracks all in a row, and in the middle of the block was the mess hall, the laundry room, and the shower. And we all, you know, had to make that trek to the mess hall three times a day. They—there was a iron triangle by the entrance to the—and that would summon us for . . .

SL: The bell that called for—right.

GT: . . . breakfast, lunch, and dinner. But when it rained the whole camp turned into a swamp, a muck. And elderly people couldn't make that trek to the mess hall. Their feet would sink in, and they didn't have the strength to pull their feet out of the muck. Or mothers with young children, you know, had enormous difficulties. So my father organized a group of young men to build boardwalks connecting every one of the barracks to the mess hall and the latrine. Essential [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Build . . .

GT: . . . places that we had to go to.

SL: The mess halls became kind of the community senator . . .

GT: That's right.

SL: . . . center, didn't they? I mean, were there—y'all were divided into blocks.

GT: That's right.

[00:51:02] SL: And so, there were, like, block meetings at the respective mess halls. Is that kinda the way it went?

GT: There were announcements. My father became a block manager because he was able to communicate to the older Japanese-speaking generation, as well as the younger American-born generation. And so, he was often making announcements at the meals, and when issues came up, then the meetings were held in the mess hall. [00:51:39] Also, it became a social center because the teenagers were allowed to have their dances periodically. And so, after dinner the tables and benches would be cleared off, or the benches would be off—put off to the side. And record players would be brought in, and the teenagers had their dances. And our barrack happened to be right next to the mess hall and—which my mother hated because of the . . .

SL: Traffic.

GT: . . . smells that came.

SL: Oh.

GT: Not only traffic, but the smells. She hated particularly the smells. The—at the end of the day after dinner was cleared off, they would use this disinfectant, which was pungent. I remember I didn't like the smell, either, and—but my mother was constantly complaining [*SL laughs*] about the smell . . .

SL: The smell.

GT: . . . of the disinfectant. But what we liked about it is when the teenagers had their dances, and my mother put us to bed, but we heard the big-band sound . . .

SL: I was gonna say . . .

GT: . . . or the . . .

SL: . . . it would be big band.

GT: . . . Andrews Sisters . . .

SL: Yes.

GT: . . . wafting over from the mess hall. And then . . .

SL: It's kind of a surreal justification of barbwire and big band.

GT: Big band. Yes. [*Laughter*] [00:53:09] Or occasionally they would show movies.

SL: In Arkansas.

GT: In Arkansas. Old Hollywood movies. We saw Charles Laughton as the hunchback of Notre Dame.

SL: Oh!

GT: Or George Raft as the gangster, you know.

SL: So were these your first motion pictures that you'd seen?

GT: They were the first movies that we were exposed to.

SL: What a—you broke—you get broken in with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. That's . . .

GT: Or gangster movies.

SL: Or gangster movies. That's interesting.

GT: And then the most magical was *Snow White*.

SL: Ah, animation.

GT: Yes. I'd never seen anything like that.

SL: No one had.

GT: And it transported me beyond the barbwire fences. That was my escape, by movies and the big-band music that came by.

[00:54:06] SL: Now, in southeast Arkansas I guess it's—is it—was it—how long were you there?

GT: We were there for about a year and a half.

SL: So you got the seasonal change . . .

GT: Yes. Oh yes.

SL: . . . and weatherwise.

[00:54:20] GT: It snowed there the first winter we were there. And that was magical because I'm a Southern Californian kid.

SL: Right.

GT: I'd never seen, never experienced snow. And one morning you wake up, and [*SL laughs*] everything is white and black—the black tar paper . . .

SL: Right.

GT: . . . of our barracks and the white. And my brother and I and my—our father went out there, and we threw snowballs at each other before breakfast. And after breakfast we came and—came back and my father had said if we kept rolling these snowballs that they'd become big and we can build a fort, and we did. And I remember that as an absolutely unforgettable, magical morning. The—it melted by afternoon.

SL: You know, I've always felt like the way that we are raised early on, even before we can really remember—just the way—the attentions we were given and the examples that we found around us have a lot to do with what forks in the road we choose in our lives and gives us the stamina to withstand adversity and all that stuff. And here you are, five, six, seven years old, and there's still some goodness in the very heart of all this stuff, all this darkness that's—that you're encased in. It just kind of—it's just a remarkable testament that, number one, any of you survived.



[00:56:07] GT: And thank God we were as young as we were and

not really experiencing the pain, the anguish. And you know, my parents had to deal with that loyalty questionnaire. You know, it was torturous for them, and we were saved that as children. My real memories are all fun memories. Catching pollywogs and watching them transform into legged fishes.

[*Laughs*] And then the tail drops off, and they become frogs.

[*SL laughs*] Magic.

SL: It is magic. Well, you know, even though you have this remarkable family unit that—and remarkable in so many ways—surely there were families in the camp that didn't quite have that attitude, that, you know, were troubling, or maybe they didn't have the loving parents that you had, and maybe the kids were a little bit hostile or mean spirited. It seemed like there was a pair of brothers that kinda tricked you [*GT laughs*] into making soldiers mad at one point.

GT: I know who you mean. [*Laughter*]

SL: I mean, for, I'm assuming, for the most part, y'all got along fine with most everybody in the camp. [00:57:43] But later on—and I—this may've been in Oregon where militancy started to brew in these camps from all the suppression and all the distrust and—did that—were the seeds of that in Arkansas, as well? Did—was there a group that was just defiant and . . .



GT: Well, you know, talking to my father as a teenager, he said being a block manager wasn't just—I mean, the definition is you're the contact person for the camp command. And you're supposed to keep things orderly in the—your block. But he said it was much, much more than that. There was conflict within the ca—within the block and, in fact, there were conflicts within marriages. I mean, the stress was . . .

SL: Well, sure.

GT: . . . very difficult. And he said he had to be a camp counselor. He had to be a psychiatrist. [*Laughs*] He had to be a mediator and, you know, people who had difficulties. So it was a very, very difficult job that he had. [00:59:03] And the introduction of the loyalty questionnaire was . . .

SL: The turning point.

GT: . . . the thing that tore up all ten camps. I mean, that question—the twenty-eight—and question . . .

SL: Twenty-seven.

GT: . . . twenty-seven, which asked you to bear arms. This was being asked of an eighty-year-old immigrant lady, you know. It was outrageous. It—how was she supposed to answer, "Yes?" It—she's gonna bear arms to defend the country that wouldn't even give her a naturalized citizenship and certainly, you know,

eighty years old. It was a sloppily put together question mark. And all this turmoil the block manager had to deal with, explain to people, or try to pacify people. It was very, very difficult.

[00:59:54] Then when—because my parents were "no-nos," we were sent to Tule Lake, the camp by the Oregon border, where all of the people that answered no-no . . .

SL: Were enemies of state.

GT: . . . were—yes—were concentrated. They were—it was called not an internment camp, but a segregation center, segregating the people that answered no-no with the people that answered yes. And there, many of the young people turned radical. They—their position was, "If you're gonna treat us like enemies and call us enemies, by gum, we'll show you what kind of enemies you have to contend with."

SL: You're messin' with. Yeah.

GT: And the memory that I have of, that's very vivid, of Tule Lake is waking up in the morning hearing young men jogging around the block to the Japanese jogging cadence. "*Wasshoi, wasshoi, wasshoi, wasshoi.*" And they jogged around for half an hour, forty-five minutes, and then they would end their jogs with "*Banzai, banzai, banzai,*" [SL laughs] you know. I mean, this is in the United States but behind barbwired [laughs] fences. And

the camp command was much, much more stern than at
Rohwer, Arkansas . . .

SL: In Rohwer, Arkansas.

[01:01:38] GT: You know, because my father was block manager, he
was able to borrow a Jeep and . . .

SL: I wanna talk . . .

GT: . . . take us . . .

SL: . . . about that because that was amazing to me. Got a Jeep,
and y'all got to go on a country drive and . . .

GT: Yes.

SL: . . . actually go visit someone.

GT: A hog farm.

SL: But I mean, isn't that fraught with danger that all of a sudden
this Japanese family is in a military Jeep in the middle of
nowhere in Arkansas? And no telling what kind of folk are out
[laughs] there . . .

GT: Yeah.

SL: . . . with their . . .

GT: And how . . .

SL: . . . rifles . . .

GT: . . . my father knew where to [laughs] go . . .

SL: I know that . . .

GT: . . . to show us . . .

SL: So this is amazing to me. Number one, that he—that y'all were given permission to do that. I just feel like that was—I'm not so sure that was a great decision. I know it was a great time and a great trip, but I'm just wondering how safe y'all were when you [*unclear words*].

[01:02:30] GT: That's right. And later on when I returned to Arkansas much after, decades after, the war, I learned that many of the people that lived near Rohwer thought we were prisoners of war.

SL: Well, yeah.

GT: Japanese, you know.

SL: Absolutely.

GT: And that they envied us because we ate three times a day. Outside the barbwire fence, some of those people did not eat three times a day. We complained about our [*laughs*] food being lousy food, you know. But at least we were eating three times a day. Those people out of—outside the barbwire [*vehicle passes*] fence apparently didn't eat as well as we did.

SL: So not only was the animosity about the war and being enemies, but there was animosity about you getting meals, as well—special treatment.

GT: Yes.

SL: Better than what they had outside. So that, again . . .



GT: And I wish I'd, you know, talked about that with my father as a teenager, but I was more issues oriented then.

SL: Well, of course.

GT: I was in the civil [*laughs*] rights movement, you know.

SL: Well . . .

GT: And when I was writing my autobiography, I thought of all the fond, very real memories I had of [*laughs*] camp, not the—you know, I wasn't old enough to be issues oriented. But that was a magical day for me and I—it still glows in my memory.

[01:04:06] SL: Well, let's just go ahead and take us on that drive 'cause . . .

GT: Well . . .

SL: . . . this is your first freedom.

GT: Well, I didn't think of it as freedom [*laughs*], you know.

SL: Yeah.

GT: I thought of it as Daddy was a block manager, and we got to do special things . . .

SL: Well . . .

GT: . . . and he . . .

SL: . . . and that's true.

GT: And you know, we [*laughs*]*—my other friends—I'd brag to them, "Daddy's gonna—my daddy's gonna take me on a ride on [*laughs*] a Jeep." And sure enough, he came with a Jeep, and we got on, and the gates opened. We drove—he drove to the gate, and gates opened, and we drove around outside the fence. And there was what I called the jungle. [*Laughs*] It was a forest, you know. But we drove along and over bridges.*

[01:04:59] And then we went to a hog farm. I'd never seen a hog and—but I had imagined—at that age I was into dinosaurs, and I thought some of the sounds that came from the jungle were dinosaurs.

SL: Well, someone told you that.

GT: Yes. [*Laughter*]

SL: Yes, and you believed them. [*Laughter*]

GT: So that's where the dinosaurs lived. And we—my father parked the Jeep, and we got out, and he was talking with a farmer, and he took us over to the pen, and we saw this huge, monstrous creature, smelly and making god-awful noises. [*Laughter*] And I thought, "That must be at least a baby dinosaur." [*Laughter*]

[01:05:50] SL: Well, now, didn't that farmer—did y'all eat with that farmer? Did he feed y'all?

GT: No . . .

SL: It seemed like he . . .

GT: . . . no.

SL: . . . was very inviting to you.

GT: He was very friendly. I—you know, I'm suspecting the farmer probably dealt with the camp command, and my father met him during the course of whatever—he probably sold . . .

SL: Food.

GT: . . . vegetables or whatever to the . . .

SL: To the camp.

GT: . . . camp. And my father knew him, and that's how he found a way to—and I don't remember seeing too many other houses. We went over, you know, the forestlike areas, and then we went to that hog farm, and we visited there. And then we drove right back to the camp, and the gates opened [*laughs*] up. And my brother and baby sister were asleep by that time, and [*laughs*] we returned to camp. It was a—you know, in memory things take on a golden glow . . .

SL: Absolutely.

GT: . . . and that Jeep ride has that quality for me in my recollection of it.

[01:07:17] SL: Is there anything else about the Arkansas camp that . . .

BT: Can I interrupt?

SL: Absolutely.

BT: Two things. One, pulling full circle, George might talk about how Arkansas has really embraced George today, and he returns to Arkansas regularly. He's done pilgrimages back to Rohwer, and he's talked to the Bill Clinton Foundation and the Little Rock symphony. You want to talk about that, George?

GT: Oh, we haven't gotten to that part yet.

BT: But I mean, I know you—you're wrapping up the conversation?

SL: Well, I'm starting to fret that . . .

BT: You said Arkansas . . .

SL: . . . we may be stepping on someone's toes somewhere. I
[GT laughs]—I'm so . . .

BT: I just want to make sure that George . . .

GT: Ties—puts the bow on it.

SL: Okay.

GT: Yeah.

[01:08:03] SL: Puts the bow on it. Well, I mean, if you're ready to put the bow on it, we can put the bow on it. But if there's anything else that you would like to talk about as far as the camp and your time in Arkansas during the war . . .

GT: During the war.

SL: . . . we should maybe try to grab . . .

GT: Well . . .

SL: . . . that now.

GT: . . . because the contrast between Arkansas and Tule Lake is—
was so great that I think my Arkansas memory has that much
more of a glow to it. Because in Arkansas it was lush. The
jungle was there, and the climate was—as much as people
complained about it, it was hot and warm and then . . .

SL: Humid.

GT: Yeah, humid. And Tule Lake was the polar opposite. It was a
dry former lake bed in ancient times. The soil of Arkansas was
either mud or dirt. [*SL laughs*] There at Tule Lake it was gritty,
hard, sharp, gritty sand and devoid of foliage.

SL: Hmm. Barren.

GT: A tumbleweed being blown around in the wind, rolling around all
over. It was a very desolate place.

[01:09:36] SL: I do remember you mentioning that your mother was
able to take both residences in these camps and make them as
home—as welcoming as possible, including at Tule Lake, which is
in Oregon but very close to the California . . .

GT: Right.

SL: . . . border, right?

GT: Right. Right on the border.

SL: She was even taking the tumbleweeds and making arrangements . . .

GT: Flower arrangements.

SL: . . . with the tum—yes.

GT: Yeah.

SL: Even . . .

GT: Or plant arrangements.

SL: Yes, yes.

GT: Tumbleweed arrangements. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, yeah.

[01:10:06] GT: And she had plenty of material to work with in Arkansas, and it was shortly after the camp had been built, so there were—there was lots of scrap lumber, and my father made little stools for the—for us, you know, the children-size stools. And my mother found—got—I don't know where she got it, but some army canvases and made . . .

SL: Made curtains.

GT: . . . curtains so that we'd have some privacy. You know, being right near the mess hall, people would line up, and they would [*laughs*] peer in. And so, we had no privacy and a lot of smells and [*laughs*] . . .

SL: It was one room, though.

GT: It was one room.

SL: . . . for the five of you.

GT: One partitioned-off portion of a barrack and no soundproofing. They couldn't talk about things private without the neighbors hearing. [01:11:08] And so, I remember my parents often went out on walks, and that was the only way they . . .

SL: Their privacy.

GT: . . . could have privacy, going off on walks around the block or maybe around other blocks. And their conversations apparently were very emotional. My mother almost always had bloodshot eyes, you know, indicating she had been crying. And that happened more often at Tule Lake because that's where all sorts of stresses were being thrown at them. And I remember my father took us to one—or took me to one protest near the camp command building.

SL: At Lake Tule.

GT: This is at Tule Lake.

SL: Tule Lake, yeah.

[01:12:06] GT: Yeah. And the circumstance was—you know, these *banzai* jogs—the camp command wanted to get at—get the leaders of these events, activities, and they would stage

midnight raids and drag some individual out. And they had the internees build a concrete cellblock that was called the stockade. And these people were thrown in there. But more often than not, they made mistakes. They misidentified the so-called leaders of these groups. And one was a very—apparent—my—according to what my father told me later on—a very nice, good person who was totally innocent who was dragged away. And so, we went there to—and the camp commander wouldn't listen, so my father organized a group of people to go there and say, you know [*clears throat*], "He is innocent. You got the wrong person." But then, suddenly, the gate opened up, and about three or four Jeeps came roaring in with soldiers standing, aiming rifles at us. And my father grabbed my hand, and we just ran back to our barrack. We didn't want that to get beyond that point. And so . . .

[01:13:43] SL: The difference between the two camps . . .

GT: Yeah, it was a much . . .

SL: . . . was night and day.

GT: . . . more intense, much more charged, fraught camp compared to the camp—to Rohwer in Arkansas.

SL: Okay. I th . . .

BT: One thing I want George to tell you about is the roots at Rohwer,

that your father created artwork . . .

GT: What?

BT: The roots.

GT: Oh yes.

BT: That's important to George, and it reflects his positive memory.



[01:14:14] GT: My father and a few other . . .

SL: Thank you.

GT: . . . men would go to one of these swampy areas where the . . .

SL: Cypress roots.

GT: . . . the cypress roots would go in and out of the water. And they would select a piece and cut it off and boil it in a oil drum and peel the bark off. And it was beautiful. It's a . . .

SL: It is.

GT: . . . it's Mother Nature's artwork. And we had it in the house, but after my father passed and I went back to visit my mother on one occasion, I peeked in the garage, and that [*laughs*] cypress root was in the garage. And I said, "Mama, that's what Daddy brought back from Arkansas. Can I have it if you don't want it?" [*Laughs*] And she said, "Oh yes, Daddy passed, so I put it in [*laughs*] the garage." And so, it's in my study now, and it's one of my treasured pieces . . .

SL: Oh, of course . . .

GT: . . . from my . . .

SL: . . . it is.

GT: . . . of my father's.

[01:15:20] SL: That's remarkable. Well, do we wanna put the wrapper on this now? I . . .

GT: Well, in 2004 we founded a museum. The story of the internment, I think, is an important American story that too many Americans, shockingly, don't know anything about. And I've been going on nationwide speaking tours to colleges, corporations, governmental agencies, talking about the internment. But because the generation that experienced the internment rarely, if ever, talk about it because it's a painful chapter.

SL: Absolutely.

[01:16:11] GT: And their children who were born after the internment know that Dad and Mom or Grandpa and Grandma were in camp, which is a term we use, but they don't know anything beyond that. And so, we felt—a group of us felt it was important to institutionalize that story, and we founded the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. We're an affiliate of the Smithsonian, and we send exhibits throughout the country. And in 2000 I became the chairman of the board of the

museum. And we decided to partner with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and—because we had—our family was there, and there were two camps in Arkansas. Jerome was the other one. It would be appropriate for us to partner with an Arkansas institution. And we . . .

SL: Sure.

GT: . . . sent five exhibits from our collection, and the University of Arkansas built three exhibits on the two inter—the Arkansas camps. And we opened them over a one-week period in various venues in Little Rock—the military museum that—or exhibit that tells the story of the 442nd, we opened at the MacArthur military museum. The exhibit called America's Concentration Camp, we opened at the convention center there, and the artwork of Henry Sugimoto, who was in the Rohwer camp, we opened at the art museum and so forth. And the—so we opened this exhibit over a one-week period, staggered, and then on Saturday we had a symposium. [01:18:15] And then on Sunday we had a bus caravan go down to the Jerome and Rohwer camps. And this was my first opportunity to see where I spent a chunk of my childhood. And I went wanting to verify my memories, and as the bus went through a large area that they said was the area where the internment camps were, it looked completely

different. I saw nothing of what I remembered as the jungle, the forest. There was no forest, and it was all cotton fields. And so, I asked about the landscape, and they said, "Oh yes." The swamp had been drained. The trees had been chopped down, and it's now all . . .

SL: Cotton.

GT: . . . cotton fields. [01:19:20] And so, I had—I didn't feel like I was going back to the place that I remembered. And then the—when we got there, they said, "There are two elements of that camp that remain." One was a smokestack that was attached to the hospital area. But I didn't get sick in camp, and I don't remember seeing that smokestack because our barrack—our block was far from . . .

SL: All the way at the end.

GT: But it was—and our block was right near the barbwire fence, so I remember the barbwire fence and the sentry tower. And they said, "There's another portion that remains. It's the cemetery." And my parents didn't take me to any burials, so I didn't remember the cemetery at all. But going through that cemetery era—area was profoundly, deeply moving for me. I looked at the markers, and there were markers, so many markers, that read Baby Yamata, Baby Tanaka, Baby Ishida. No first names



and only one year. They were born either dead, stillborn . . .

SL: Or didn't survive.

GT: . . . or they died shortly after being born, and they didn't have a first name. Medical care was, despite the hospital that was there, inadequate. The food, you know, was not very good. And then there were others that were born in nine—eighteen eighty-something or other, eighteen seventy-something other.

SL: The elders.

GT: The elder—elderly people that couldn't make the—survive the journey or their period in internment. It was very moving. [01:21:26] But the most prominent marker there was a crumbling concrete pylon. It was old, and it was starting to crumble away, and at the base of it were the names of all the young men who went from Rohwer and fought with the 442nd and perished. And standing there reading those names—just thinking about it, I'm kind of losing it but they—their—those incredible, crazy young men who went from that camp and fought and died . . .

SL: Died.

GT: . . . for this country.

SL: After all that.

GT: They were the greatest generation, and these young men whose

names are there on the base of that monument were extraordinarily, uncommonly great. They're—they made my America possible. And I read recently that the National Park Service has given the University of Arkansas at Little Rock a \$240,000 grant to restore the markers . . .

SL: And preserve . . .

GT: . . . at that cemetery. And subsequently, as a result of that partnership, we have a program now to bring teachers from the education system every summer to the Japanese American National Museum for a month and bone up on that chapter of American history and work it into their curriculum because we need to know, and we need to institutionalize this story so that America can learn from it. Amer—you know, you—unless you know the mistakes that you've made in history, you won't learn from it. And by working with the educators in Arkansas to tell an Arkansas story, we hope to—and we're doing this with other educational institutions in Colorado where there was a—an internment camp and also in Wyoming. [01:24:07] And subsequently the people of McGehee, Arkansas, which happens to be halfway between the two Arkansas camps, Rohwer and Jerome . . .

SL: Jerome.

GT: . . . took an abandoned railway station there and utilized it as a venue for the World War II Japanese American Internment Museum, and . . .

SL: That's beautiful.

GT: . . . I was there for the opening and spoke at it.

SL: That's a beautiful thing.

GT: And that was covered by CBS for their *CBS Sunday Morning* program. And so, we are finding ways to get the story out and known. And the—another way that we're doing that is by developing this musical that's Broadway bound so that we reach people not just up here, intellectually, but with music and the power of drama, getting people to profoundly, emotionally feel and personalize that story. [*Vehicle passes*]

SL: You're doing great stuff, George. We really, really appreciate your . . .

BT: And, like, maybe one more . . .

SL: Yeah.

BT: . . . technical note. I'd like George to explain to you the politically correct term for people of this . . .

GT: Oh yes.

BT: . . . community.

GT: It's very, very important to listen to what George is about to tell

you.

SL: Okay.

[01:25:40] GT: We so frequently hear the term Japanese internment camp.

SL: Okay.

GT: We were not imprisoned by the Japanese.

SL: Oh.

GT: That's what the term says. We were American citizens interned, imprisoned by our own United States government here in the United States. You know, Japanese internment camp suggests some camp in the Pacific . . .

SL: Right.

GT: . . . Theater where the Japanese imprisoned prisoners of war. We were amer—we are American citizens imprisoned by our own government in the United States.

SL: So it's really an American internment camp.

GT: That's right. [01:26:32] It's a Japanese American internment camp or a US internment camp for Japanese . . .

SL: Japanese.

GT: . . . Americans. But 99 percent of the time, we see and hear Japanese internment camp, and it makes me bridle. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, it will me, too, now. [*Laughter*] You know, I forgot to ask

you. [01:26:52] What was the population of the Rohwer camp?

GT: The number I remember seeing is eighteen thousand.

SL: Eighteen thousand . . .

GT: We were . . .

SL: . . . people.

GT: . . . one of the biggest cities in [*laughs*] Arkansas at that time.

SL: Yeah, that's bigger than Fayetteville, where I was born.

GT: Eighteen thousand.

[01:27:09] SL: And were there a total of six internment camps
across the country?

GT: Ten altogether.

SL: Ten.

GT: There were two in—can you imagine the blistering hot desert of
Arizona? There were two in the most desolate places in
California, and there were camps in Wyoming, Idaho, Utah,
Colorado.

SL: And two in Arkansas.

BT: And Tule Lake was in northern California, not Oregon.

SL: Oh, okay.

GT: Yeah, it was . . .

SL: It was real close to the border . . .

GT: . . . Oregon border.

SL: . . . though.

BT: Very close.

SL: Okay. Yeah. Thank you.

GT: And two in Arkansas.

SL: What a remarkable story. And we haven't even gotten to your career. [*Laughter*] I usually . . .

GT: Well, this . . .

SL: . . . spend two hours just getting people through their public schools, you know, so I would love to . . .

[01:28:00] GT: Because of this Arkansas connection, this childhood Arkansas connection, you know, I've fallen in love with Arkansas and—well, this is my first visit to Hot Springs.

SL: Hot Springs.

GT: But there's a history here.

SL: There is.

GT: And this is President Clinton's birthplace, and . . .

SL: Pretty close.

GT: . . . we couldn't use an elevator in this hotel yes—last night because [*laughter*] there was this burly, well-dressed man holding an open elevator for someone, and we were told this morning that it was President Clinton staying . . .

SL: That's correct.

GT: . . . right here . . .

SL: That's correct.

GT: . . . in a floor below us. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's correct. That's correct.

[01:28:44] GT: And do you know that I substituted for President Clinton when we had that exhibit opening in Little Rock?

SL: No.

GT: At the luncheon on Saturday, President Clinton was supposed to be our keynote speaker. But that was when he had his heart [*SL laughs*] problem. And . . .

SL: I guess he could be excused. [*Laughter*]

GT: And so, I had to step into those great big shoes and deliver the keynote that afternoon.

SL: I'm sure you did fine. [*GT laughs*] I'm sure you did fine. And really just as appropriate, if not more so.

[01:29:19] GT: And we are fans of President Clinton's. We've contributed to the Clinton Library, and we were there for the opening for . . .

SL: The rainy opening.

GT: . . . a period. We came out of the hotel, and it was, as you know, bone-chilling cold and raining . . .

SL: Yes.

GT: . . . and we didn't come prepared for the rain, and there was a man right in front of the hotel front door selling these one-dollar . . .

SL: Ponchos.

GT: . . . you know, ponchos—transparent . . .

SL: Plastic, yeah.

GT: Yes, for ten dollars. [*Laughs*]

SL: Oh!

GT: But we paid ten dollars for it, and we went out there, and we were shivering with that poncho on [*laughs*] and getting cold and wet and really frustrated. And then Bono came on and started singing "When the rains came," and we said we'd had—"We've had enough. [*Laughter*] We're gonna go back."

SL: "We're gonna run and hide." [*Laughter*]

GT: We've been—we saw it from the comfort of our warm hotel room on our television set.

SL: Yeah, I wish . . .

GT: All the presidents . . .

SL: . . . that they had postponed that. [*GT laughs*] It was kind of a mistake to have . . .

[01:30:32] GT: But we've gone back to Clinton Library on a more pleasant late spring [*laughs*] visit, and it's a fantastic museum.

SL: Well, I hope you come back often. Continue to do that.

GT: We will continue to do that.

SL: And I hope you and I can cross paths again. I'd like to pick up our story coming out of Arkansas and how you eventually get back to Los Angeles and start over in Los Angeles and the entire Latin American community, the Mexican barrio—all that is so fascinating to me. I love your book . . .

GT: I thank you very much.

SL: . . . by the way. And I am so impressed that you wrote it. I mean . . .

GT: Oh, that's me. All me. [01:31:15] And I have a YouTube series where I talk about what's trending in pop culture, and the current one that was just posted takes us back to East LA and the Mariachi Plaza. And my nephew, my brother's son—you know, my father opened up the employment agency in Little Tokyo.

SL: I—and your mother made him quit [*GT laughs*] for a while. And I love her for that, and I love him for that, for what he did. But . . .

GT: Well, a block away from where my father had his employment agency, my nephew, my father's grandson, opened up a shared—what's the term? A shared workspace, you know,

where you rent . . .

SL: Oh!

UI: A studio.

SL: Okay.

GT: It's a—he calls it Opodz. *O-P-O-D-Z*.

SL: Okay.

GT: You get—have your little pod there.

SL: You have your little pod.

GT: But you also, you know, have other entrepreneurial people.

They're innovative people working there, and you bounce off of each—well, Scotty, my nephew, started up his operation, real-estate operation, a block away from where his grandfather had his employment shop, where he helped people get employment. And now his grandson is helping people create their own employment.

SL: I will try to find that next time I'm in California because I . . .

GT: No, no, no, it's on your computer.

SL: . . . always stay in Seal Beach and . . .

GT: Oh, I see, yes.

SL: And so, I could just take a little drive and . . .

[01:32:59] GT: In Little Tokyo there's a Japanese Village—that shopping mall. My father's office was right on the 1st Street

entrance to Japanese—it was an alley back then. Moline Alley.
And Scotty's operation is at the 2nd Street side of Japanese
Village Plaza.

SL: That's a great, serendipitous sort of full circle, isn't it?

GT: And my nephew is on the—my show and he talks about it.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Well, I'm gonna tune in. [*Laughs*]

GT: Yeah, it's . . .

[01:33:37] SL: All right. Is there anything else? Are we so late now
that we've made enemies anywhere? [*GT laughs*] I hope not.

BT: Hey, I'll find out in a few minutes. [*Laughter*]

SL: Okay, okay. [*Laughter*] Well, I can't thank you enough for your
generosity.

GT: Oh, it's my pleasure.

SL: Both of you. I really . . .

GT: Well . . .

SL: . . . appreciate the help.

GT: Thank you very much . . .

SL: You know . . .

GT: . . . for giving us this opportunity.

SL: Well . . .

[Tape stopped]

[01:33:54] SL: What we're talkin' about is the atomic bomb and the loss of your aunt and your cousin who were shopping . . .

GT: Yes.

SL: . . . in downtown Hiroshima at the time. So if you wanna just—I've kind of destroyed a lead for you but [*GT laughs*] if you—if we can talk a little bit about your—what your circumstances were and how this affected your mother, particularly, when news of the atomic bomb was made at the camp.



[01:34:24] GT: My aunt, my mother's younger sister, who had gone back to j—not back to Japan, but gone to Japan with her parents and married, and they were living in another prefecture, but she had come to visit my grandparents, her parents, with her five-year-old son. And they happened to be—have gone downtown shopping that morning that the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, so they both perished. Their bodies were found in a canal. But we were in camp—in Tule Lake at that time. And the—somehow the word got—it penetrated the barbwire fence, and we learned that a horrific bomb, a most devastating bomb, had fallen on Hiroshima. And that was all we knew, and my mother went crazy with worry and anxiety. And there was no way of getting any more information. We weren't allowed to have radios. We weren't allowed to have newspapers, and the

camp command wouldn't share any news of that bombing with us. And so, we didn't find out until we were released. But while we were in camp, my mother was driven insane by worry, and my father said to her, "We understand it's a horrible, horrific, historically devastating bomb, and so, just to give ourselves some peace, let's consider your parents as having perished in that." But when we were released, we discovered that they had survived. Their home was some distance from ground zero. Their home collapsed on them, but they both survived. But my grandfather had died a few years after that. Yeah, it's a epic story of twentieth-century America.

[01:36:45] SL: Now, you knew this aunt. Do you—did you know this aunt?

GT: The one that died?

SL: Your mother's aunt.

GT: No, I never met her.

SL: You never . . .

GT: I . . .

SL: Okay.

GT: . . . never met her, nor my cousin.

SL: Right. Okay.

GT: They returned before the war began.

SL: Mh-hmm. Okay.

GT: And I wa—you know, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, I was four years old, and I think they went back when I was still . . .

SL: Three or—yeah. Well, that's a horrible loss, and for your mom, especially.

GT: Yeah, it was—it's a twentieth-century story.

SL: It kinda tipped her over the edge, didn't it? I mean, she—it seems like I remember the militants in that camp were pressuring her to . . .

GT: Oh yes.

SL: . . . sign some kind of oath or to join the fight or . . .

GT: Well . . .

SL: . . . something and . . .

GT: . . . yes. The government announced—because it was such a fraught camp and it—there were riots happening all the time, and the government said, "All right, we're gonna wash our hands of Tule Lake. We're gonna close it down, let you all out." And that was terrifying. I mean, this is in the middle of a war, and we were put into a segregation camp, and they were gonna let us all out? [01:38:13] You know, and there were some extraordinary people. This wasn't our camp, but Manzanar in the Owens Valley near Los Angeles, there—in Pasadena there is

a Quaker family that ran a bookstore. I can't remember the name of the bookstore now, but they were opposed to the internment. And when the internment happened, they said they were gonna do whatever they can to bring comfort to the internees. And every month they drove from Pasadena with a carload of books that they took to Manzanar and donated to the people there. But on one trip they were shot at by the rednecks along the way. And everybody, I'm told, in that camp said, "Well, that's it. They're not gonna come back. I mean, they're not gonna risk their lives." But sure enough, on the appointed day the next month, they came back with another carload of books. There were extraordinary people like that, and why did I begin this? I was trying to back up a story . . .

SL: Well, we were talkin' . . .

GT: . . . at Tule Lake.

SL: . . . about how . . .

BT: Your mother's citizenship, maybe?

SL: The, yeah, the . . .

GT: Oh, oh, oh . . .

SL: . . . yeah.

[01:39:37] GT: Yes. And so, there were these people that were shooting at white people that were friends of Japanese

Americans. And if they let us all out, we would all have been . . .

SL: Open season.

GT: . . . living targets.

SL: Yeah.

GT: And so, the only way to keep the Tule Lake camp going was to have so many people that renounced their citizenship that the government would have to keep it open and—according to the Geneva Convention or whatever the argument was. And so, just to keep our family safe, my mother did the unthinkable. She . . .

SL: And renounced her citizenship.

GT: . . . renounced her citizenship.

SL: But . . .



[01:40:25] GT: And we owe so much to this extraordinary man named Wayne Collins. He was a civil rights attorney in San Francisco. No attorney would touch Japanese Americans with a ten-foot pole at that time and certainly not people who were in—at Tule Lake from a segregation camp and most certainly not people who had renounced their American citizenship, and yet this man did. And he was able to get a stay for my mother, but there were some families that were actually loaded onto ships

to—quote—"deport." They were Americans. Born here. They should've been deported to Portland, Oregon, or Los Angeles or San Francisco or Seattle. They were being deported to Japan. And Wayne Collins got their stay and went running up the gangplank and said, "You, the Ishida family. You, the Kimura family. Come with me. I have your papers," and got them off the boat.

SL: Wow.

[01:41:40] GT: He was an extraordinary man, and I thought of dedicating my book to Wayne Collins, but I love my father more.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Well, maybe the next book [*GT laughs*] can be Wayne Collins.

GT: I think I owe the next to my mother.

SL: Yeah. Oh, that's true. [*Laughter*] Oh yeah, you don't wanna face—yeah, that's true. I would do that, too. Well, thank you for . . .

GT: Well . . .

SL: . . . for clarifying that. And thank you, Brad, for helpin' us with the . . .

GT: Thank you so much for . . .

SL: Let me get this book, and I'll just . . .

GT: Oh yes.

[End of Interview 01:42:10]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]