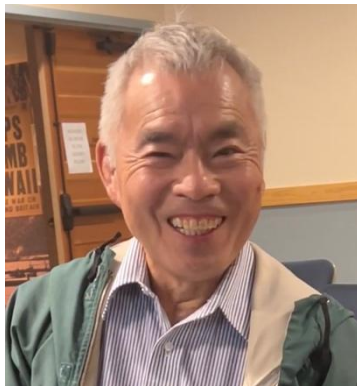
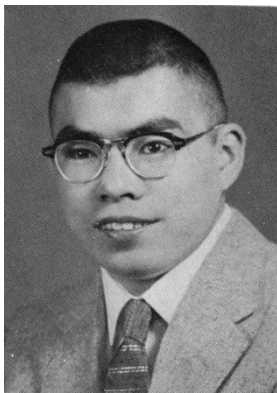




THE WAR BABIES OF WORLAND: ORAL HISTORIES FROM THE CLASS OF 1960



TOM FUJIKAWA

Extended conversation after videotaping

Interviewers: Cathy Healy

Proofreader: Peggy Steele Porter

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This transcript expands from the video due to additional conversations.

This is **Cathy Healy** on October 8th, at 12:30 pm. I am in Washington, DC. And I'm talking with Tom Fujikawa, who is in Denver. What is your full name, and was there any nickname you were known by during your Worland days?

Tom Fujikawa: Tom Fujikawa, and everybody called me Tom.

Cathy: C'mon, we called you, Tommy, give me a break. [Laughs] If you weren't born in Worland, Tom, how old were you when your family arrived and when you left? And what brought your family to Worland?

FUJIKAWAS MOVED TO WORLAND IN 1952

Tom: We moved to Worland when I was nine. We moved for an opportunity to do better. We were in Brighton, Colorado, and farming was really difficult for us because we got hailed out about every other year – or every year – it seemed like, and we just couldn't make ends meet

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Cathy: What had your parents heard about farming in Worland when they moved there?

Tom: The folks had a friend in Basin, and my dad took a trip there. He talked to – I think it was – the Shimagaki family in Basin. From this, my parents decided to go to Worland to farm.

Cathy: How did they get their land, and what did they want to farm?

Tom: We share-cropped for the first couple of years with Mr. Taketa. The farm was on Highway 16, on top of the hill where the Episcopal Church is now, and that's where our house was.

Cathy: Had your family been farmers before?

FAMILY BACKGROUND, WORLD WAR II

Tom: My parents were always farmers. My dad was born in the United States in the Seattle area and then received his education in Japan through high school. He (aged 17) then came back to the Seattle area. There he met my mom and they were married.

Cathy: So, in Japan, he learned how to farm?

Tom: Yes. When Pop moved back to the US, Pop's father was helping at the Inatsu's (Mother's family) strawberry farm and met my mother.

Cathy: So, her family raised strawberries – did your father learn to raise vegetables in Japan?

Tom: I really don't know. He probably would have raised all kinds of vegetables, plus maybe rice. In fact, I have a cousin in Japan now who owns the farm, or his family does.

Cathy: Have you been there? Have you visited him?

Tom: No, I have never visited.

Bad and Worse Choices for Japanese-Americans on West Coast

Cathy: So they were raising strawberries near Seattle, and then Pearl Harbor happened on December 7, 1941.

Tom: Yes, and they were greatly affected by that. In March of 1942, they had a choice of either moving inland or moving to the internment camps. So we moved – my folks, who were both 31 years old, my maternal grandma, my sister, Lynn (7), my brother, Bruce (3), and my sister, Mary (2). I was on the way. [Tom was born Oct. 18, 1942.]

Cathy: Were the orders to the Japanese different in the State of Washington from the orders in the State of California?

Tom: The choices were the same for all people of Japanese ancestry in the Western coastal areas of the US. They had to choose between moving inland or going to internment camps. The parents chose to go to Colorado because they had a cousin who was willing to help them. So they were ordered to board a Government-supplied train to Colorado and ended up in Brighton, Colorado, north of Denver.

Cathy: They left everything behind. They lost everything.

Tom: Mostly everything. A single suitcase was allowed per person. The first years were really rough for them because, with four little kids and no income or very little income coming in, we were probably poverty-stricken.

Cathy: Terrible. Really difficult.

FUJIKAWAS' REMARKABLE FARMER'S MARKET - MAYBE WYOMING'S FIRST?

Cathy: You said your father rented land from Mr. Taketa when you moved here.

Tom: Yes, we rented from Mr. Taketa for two years. Then we moved to the Hayashida farm northeast of town, on the same road where Grant Ujifusa's family lived. [Grant was a classmate.]

Cathy: How old were you then?

Tom: I was 11.

Cathy: Okay, when your parents started to farm vegetables, were any other people farming vegetables around Worland?

Tom: Initially, we were the only family selling vegetables, but later the Numotos came. They farmed just a couple of blocks from us.

Cathy: How did your parents decide what vegetables to raise?

You Name It, Fujikawas Probably Grew It

Tom: Mr. Taketa knew what would grow and what wouldn't grow in the Worland area. My parents probably got that information from him. We grew all kinds of things... you name it, we probably grew it. We raised beets, turnips, beans, radishes, squash, cantaloupe, watermelon, tomatoes, sweet peppers, chili peppers, cucumbers, potatoes, and sweet corn. And then at the Hayashidas, we had enough area to farm more crops. So we also had a little alfalfa and barley.

Cathy: When did you start planting? And did you have ways that you started the seedlings early?

Tom: We started as soon as the weather would allow in the spring. We started getting the ground ready by plowing, harrowing, leveling, and cutting the ditches. Also, we built a hotbed in the ground ("miniature greenhouse") to start seedlings. This shortened the time to maturity for the plants so we could harvest earlier in the summer. The seedlings that we started included the following: cabbage, cauliflower, sweet and hot peppers, and celery. We bought our tomato plants from a nursery in Colorado.

Cathy: How many acres did you have?

Tom: It was 160 acres, probably, but our vegetable farm was about 60 acres and the remainder was in alfalfa and barley.

Cathy: How big was your greenhouse? Was it right by your house, and did it have glass or plastic windows?

Tom: The hotbed was near a well at Hayashidas. The dimensions were about 60' x 6' x 12". We covered it at night with glass panels and cattail mats.

Cathy: Cat tails?!

Tom: Yes, we used the cattails for insulation to keep seedlings warm so they wouldn't freeze during the cold temperatures at night.

Cathy: I don't understand about putting cat tails over the top every night and taking them off every morning.

Tom: In fact, we made our own cattail mats from the marsh areas around Worland. We used the whole plant. We made the mats about 6 feet long, so we had probably a dozen, enough to cover the hotbeds.

Cathy: Wow! It's still really cold then, and April and May are when most of the snow comes.

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Tom: Yes. We'd keep an eye on the weather, and whenever it was free from frost, we would start planting the seeds and transplanting our seedlings into the soil on the farmland.

Cathy: Did all of you kids work out in the garden from the time you were little?

Tom: Yes, all of us. My mother pulled double duty by cooking, caring for the house, and doing a full shift helping with the crops.

Cathy: Would you have to get up really early in the morning in the summer, to pick all the vegetables, to take them fresh to the vegetable stand?

Tom: Right. We did get up early to pick everything up. We opened the stand (near the canal in the city on Highway 16) when the sweet corn was ready; that was probably toward the middle to end of July.

Cathy: So the stand would close when? About the middle of September?

Tom: We tried to prolong closing until October.

Cathy: So, all the money you made for the year, you had to make during that short period of time?

Tom: Right.

Cathy: That's a huge pressure

Tom: The community of Worland really helped us out by supporting us, by buying from us.

Cathy: People loved your vegetables. We'd brag about them. We'd go to other places and say, "Oh, you can't imagine. We have the best vegetables in the world." You and your family really added to what was special about Worland.

Tom: Yes.

Cathy: Did your parents hire any extra help, or was it all with you kids working?

Tom: It was all us kids.

No Fujikawas Are Farmers Now

Cathy: Did any of you go into farming?

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Tom: We chose other professions. That's why the folks said that education was so important, that you need a college education to help you avoid the farm.

Cathy: So you became a pharmacist.

Tom: Yes.

Cathy: And ended up owning your own drugstore in Denver. Your brother Bruce worked for Boeing in Seattle, didn't he?

Tom: Bruce has a degree as a mechanical engineer. He worked for Boeing as an engineer, and later, he became a programmer for Hewlett-Packard. Mary became a school teacher, and then my younger brother, Wright, also became a pharmacist. So all the kids got a college education, except my sister, Lynn, who got married a couple of years after high school, but she did go to a community college in Casper to do a secretarial type of work.

Cathy: Lynn. Okay, I didn't know her.

Tom: Lynn just spent maybe two months or three months in school because we moved to Worland when she was in the 12th grade. She married a farmer, Sas Nakamura, who lived in Lucerne, north of Thermopolis, between Worland and Thermopolis.

Cathy: Do you still raise vegetables yourself?

Tom: I have a small garden –

Cathy: What do you mean by “small?” Maybe it's not 60 acres? [Smiles]

Tom: Are you kidding?! It's really tiny – let's see, maybe 6 to 7 yards wide, and about 30 feet long. So, I just raise what I like... tomatoes and cucumbers. My wife likes cantaloupe so we try to raise them here. I also raise a few beets, kale, and beans – and we have early spinach, peas, and radishes.

Cathy: Wow! Tom, that sounds great. I know sometimes you take some extra vegetables over to Laine [Bailey DeFreece, a classmate who also lives in Denver.]

Tom: Right, but this was a bad year. We took off most of the month of August, and I didn't really want all my efforts to go to waste, so I just planted squash, which would take up most of the area. [Laughs]

Reparations Helped Pay for Daughter's Undergraduate Degree

Cathy: Tom, when we think about World War II and your family losing almost everything, the circle came back around when Congress paid reparations to

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those Japanese-Americans who were forced to pack a suitcase and leave everything. You qualified as “voluntary evacuees.” The reparations you Fujikawas received were deeply personal because it was Grant Ujifusa who got knighted by the Emperor of Japan for the strategy to get the reparations through Congress and signed by Ronald Reagan. How did the reparations impact your family? I think this goes back to your parents and their emphasis on education.

Tom: Right. It helped my daughter go to college for her undergraduate degree.

Cathy: Where did she go? What did she study?

Tom: Shelly went to Harvey Mudd in the Los Angeles area. Her major was chemistry.

Cathy: For those who don't know Harvey Mudd (and its engineering and science reputation), it's more difficult right now to get into Harvey Mudd than to get into MIT or CalTech.

Tom: She eventually went to get her Ph.D. at Harvard, and then she went on to Fordham for a law degree. So that money did help.

Heart Mountain Internment Camp

Cathy: During our class reunion last summer, some of us took a field trip to Heart Mountain. You surprised all of us when you told us you had no idea about Heart Mountain until after you had graduated from the University of Wyoming and were in your first job in Denver as a pharmacist.

Tom: Correct

Cathy: Why do you suppose you didn't hear about it? The rest of us in the group had the same reaction – none of us knew about Heart Mountain until later.

Tom: Maybe it was too painful for our parents to talk about it, so they didn't say anything.

[Video of Tom](#) telling classmates about his re-location experiences during a reunion trip to the Heart Mountain Internment Camp near Powell.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: 1947-1954

Cathy: What do you remember about elementary school in Worland?

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Tom: Well, I didn't arrive in Worland until 1952, in the spring of the fourth grade, so I don't remember very much.

Cathy: Did you say Grant befriended you when you arrived here?

Tom: Right, he welcomed me. That was a good feeling. Here is another Japanese, so I thought I can probably get along pretty well here.

Cathy: When you were a kid – let me back up. There's a new TV show about a Korean family who moved to a small town in Wyoming because they thought it would help their daughter get into a prestigious college since big-name universities want geographic diversity. In the movie, the family ran into a lot of racism. Did you have that problem when you moved to Worland?

Tom: No, none at all. We didn't socialize that much, and then in school, I didn't feel any prejudice at all.

JUNIOR HIGH: 1954-1956

Cathy: What was life like in junior high? Did you have teachers you remember? Did you do school activities, or did you mostly work after school on the farm?

Tom: Life was fine during this period. The teacher I remember was a science teacher in the 8th grade. Mr. Stroud. It was general science but the physics part was all new and very interesting at the time to me.

I just worked on the farm after school, so I didn't have any after-school activities.

WORLAND HIGH SCHOOL: 1956-1960

Cathy: You were the State Champion in wrestling. Was wrestling your main thing outside of working on the farm after school?

Tom: Yes, wrestling, because that was about the only sport I could participate in. I was too short for basketball. Farming ended in October or November, so wrestling was the sport in which I could participate. It ran from about the end of the farming season until February or March, so it didn't interfere with the farm work.

Cathy: When we were growing up, getting your letter for being on a sports team and wearing it on your jacket or on your sweater was a very, very big deal. Usually, it was thought of as the big guys like Sonny Shearer, Loreny Laird, Dean Frederick, and Gerald Cook had letter-sweaters, but you were small, and you got into wrestling, and you became a state champion.

Tom: Yes.

Cathy: Do you have memorable matches that were particularly tough to win?

Tom: Probably the match that I remember most was in my junior year. I took second in the state because I didn't listen to the coach. I didn't eat after I weighed in because I had to lose weight. I should have eaten. The coach – Bill Martin – would say, “You’ve got to eat something to get energy for the match,” and I said, “I'm not hungry.” And that was a big, big mistake because I just ran out of energy.

Cathy: So, explain for people who don't understand wrestling weights.

Tom: They have weight divisions, the smallest weight was 95 pounds. And the next weight was 103. And the next weight was 112 – that was my weight – then 120, 139., 145...and there was a heavyweight, too.

Cathy: So you were wrestling at 112. What was your normal weight?

Tom: I was a little heavy...113-114. So just to make weight, you had to be no more than 114 so you would just have to lose water – you could sweat it out.

Cathy: Did you spend most of the wrestling season kind of hungry?

Tom: Not really. Most of the time I burned off what I ate.

Cathy: What were some of the tricks that you used to win your matches?

Tom: Probably being in shape and having a few muscles.

Cathy: How did you get in shape and stay in shape? And how did you develop the muscles?

Tom: Well – working on the farm. You're always using your muscles, right? I remember lifting 100 pounds of potatoes and delivering them to the schools before I went to class.

Cathy: You only weighed 114 pounds, and you lifted 100 pounds of potatoes?!

Tom: Yes.

Cathy: Whoa! I had no idea you were doing that.

Tom: But it was tough, I couldn't do it for a long period of time, but I could lift the sacks on and off the truck, usually from the truck to a wheelbarrow.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES: LIFE-CHANGING DRIVER'S LICENSE

Cathy: When did you start to fish? Because I know you're completely obsessive about fishing now. Did you start to fish when you were a little kid?

Tom: As a child, I did very little fishing. But in Worland, a family friend took me fishing at Ten Sleep. They had an extra fishing pole and I fished a creek. I happened to catch a couple of fish, and I said, "Hey, this is fun." And so as soon as I got my driver's license, Wright and I went up to Ten Sleep every chance we got and went fishing.

Cathy: How old were you when you got your driver's license and had access to a car?

Tom: My sophomore year. That was a good time, having your driver's license because you could socialize more and go fishing or whatever.

Cathy: How could you socialize more?

Tom: Because all my friends (Tom Porter, Decker Nomura, Gary Diehl, Ricky Hake), were living in town. This group was sort of my small clique.

Cathy: Did you ever think about taking vocational agriculture classes?

Tom: No, just college prep courses.

RADIO TO TELEVISION GENERATION

Cathy: Let's see. [Looking at the prepared questions.] Do you remember getting television?

Tom: We didn't get television until my senior year in high school.

Cathy: Do you watch a lot of television now?

Tom: Yes, quite a bit.

Cathy: You just blew my theory about who watches television, Tom. We didn't get television in Worland until we were older. I don't watch much television, while my little sister, Debbie, who is eight years younger, watched TV a lot and

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ended up working in television. She and her husband watch television and movies like crazy. But I read print, and I read digital and don't watch much TV. My theory is – was until YOU! – that if you didn't have that TV much growing up, you weren't all that interested in it.

Tom: Yes. [Smiles] I'm watching a lot of TV.

IMPACT FROM GROWING UP IN A BOOM TOWN

Cathy: Let's do some reflection. What about the experience of growing up in Worland created the most impact on your life?

Tom: The most impact was the summer after graduation from Worland High School. I hurt my back. And that got me out of the draft when I was called up. That accident kept me out of the Vietnam War. So that was probably Godsent because I didn't want to go.

Cathy: You would have been in terrible danger if you'd been sent to Southeast Asia. We heard stories about U.S. soldiers who couldn't tell the difference between a Japanese-American soldier and a Viet Cong.

Tom: You're right. We have a friend who suffered PTSD due to his service.

Cathy: Does your back still bother you?

Tom: No, not really.

Cathy: When we were growing up, Worland was the sixth largest city in Wyoming, and the population more than doubled because of the oil boom. We had two flights a day, coming in and out from Denver, and Main Street was full of stores. Did living with growth and more growth impact your adult outlook?

Tom: Yes, because you figure times aren't too bad, so you could probably do whatever you want to do as a pharmacist. After college, I went to Denver and found a job at a pharmacy – this was in 1965. From there, I went to another pharmacy called Rocky Mountain Pharmacy. I had an opportunity to buy it, so I took out a small business administration loan, and I operated the pharmacy for 33 years. But it was the wrong time to own a pharmacy because all the chains, big stores, and grocery stores were installing pharmacies. So it was tough during the latter years. In 2001 I had an opportunity to close the pharmacy due to city redevelopment.

WORLAND HIGH SCHOOL PART 2

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Cathy: We talked about a question before, about high school about you belonging to a church youth group. I think your answer is quite interesting.

Tom: My folks were Buddhist. But when I did go to church, very infrequently, it was to the United Methodist Church on Main Street.

Cathy: Did you become Buddhist? Are you Buddhist now?

Tom: No. I'm sort of a mixture of Buddhist and Christianity.

Cathy: Like you were back then?

Tom: Yes

WISDOM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Cathy: I have a question for generations to come who might listen to this and read the transcript: Is there any wisdom you would like to pass on?

Tom: Get as much education as you can because nobody can take it away from you. Do it throughout your life. If you have this education, you're always learning new things, and it gives you an opportunity for a better life.

Cathy: What are you learning now?

Tom: I'm still working part-time in a pharmacy.

Cathy: OH! So you've got to learn about all those new drugs coming out?

Tom: Yes, it's hard to keep up with everything. And there's always more medical knowledge, so that's why I have to give it up because the brain can't absorb all that memorization.

Cathy: Well! So you don't have to do crossword puzzles to fight off dementia, not with memorizing those long words for new drugs that are unpronounceable and remembering the consequences of taking them.

Tom: This is probably the last year that I'm going to work in pharmacy.

Cathy: Probably? Maybe. [Smiles] I'll bet that you're the only one in our class who still has a regular job.

THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF THE WASHAKIE MUSEUM

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Cathy: I'd like to thank you, Tom, for sharing your experiences with the oral history collection at the Washakie Museum. We really, really appreciate your taking the time.

Tom: Thank you, too, for doing this oral history for the Worland Class of 1960