

Port of Los Angeles Centennial Oral History Project
Yokio Tatsumi Oral History
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Male Speaker: So, the first question is the hard one. Please say your name and spell it.

Yukio Tatsumi: My name is Yukio Tatsumi –

MS: One more time. Okay. Again.

YT: My name is Yukio, Y-U-K-I-O, last name, Tatsumi, T-A-T-S-U-M-I.

MS: Good. You can talk to me.

YT: Okay.

MS: Yukio, when were you born and where?

YT: I was born August 23rd, 1920, in Terminal Island.

MS: Great. What are your earliest memories of Terminal Island, growing up as a little boy there? What kind of place was it? What was it like to live there?

YT: Well, it was a close-knit community and a self-contained community. Terminal Island was a thriving close-knit, self-contained community with about 3000 Japanese and American Japanese like me.

MS: What did it look like? What kind of place was it? If you were visiting there today, it's gone. Bring it back so I can see it.

YT: Well, it was all sand, like sea. So, we all played barefooted, played marbles and everything on the sand. But later on, we built a baseball team. We built our own baseball field. We all hauled in dirt to make a baseball field, which we named Skippers Field – San Pedro Skippers.

MS: That was the name of the team?

YT: Right.

MS: Let's go back a bit. Tell me about your father and your mother. Where did they come from? When did they come here? What did they do?

YT: Well, as far as I know, my father came right before the nineteenth century, I think, latter part of eighteenth century.

MS: Then you can say 1800s?

YT: 1800s, yes.

MS: Start again, sir.

YT: Well, my father came to the United States in 1800 and close to 1900 anyway. I understand they all came to Seattle first. They worked on the railroads. Well, I've heard that twelve Japanese men came from Seattle to Los Angeles this way. My father came to White Point and he dove for abalone. After four years, I understand they were accused as spies or something. That's when they first went to Terminal Island.

MS: Let's go back again. What year did he come down here?

YT: My father came here in the early 1900s. I don't know the exact date. But then like I said, he ended up in White Point and started diving for abalone.

MS: People don't know this, what was White Point? Who was there? Where is it? What people live there?

YT: White Point is a little bit north of Point Fermin. It's along the shore. There was a lot of abalone them days. I don't know, but he started abalone diving. The shells, I heard, they sent it to Germany. The meat, they tried it. They sold it to the Japanese stores in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles.

MS: Tell me what did an abalone diver do? I mean, how did he dress? What did he do? What was that job?

YT: Well, I have a picture of my father. He's got a cloth, loincloth, shorts on. That's just diving with his goggles.

MS: So, he had to hold his breath.

YT: Yes. So, he only has limited time that he can dive. But in those days, abalone was plentiful.

MS: For people who don't know what abalone is, what is abalone?

YT: Abalone, it's a shell. What do you call it? It's a shell with the meat, abalone meat, which is very delicious. As a kid, we used to dry abalone. Even going to school, we used to take a knife and abalone. We used to chew it all the time. It was really good.

MS: What was the community at White Point? Who lived there? How big was it? What did it look like?

YT: Well, those days, I don't know. Because it was a long time ago. But in the 1930s, my father, he and his partner, they bought the White Point, the Hotel Hot Springs. That's where he dove again for, I don't know, just to eat. At that time there was a tenth Olympic Games in Los Angeles. The track and field athletes came to White Point. They stayed in White Point. They worked out in at San Pedro High School. That's all I can remember. I think I was about twelve years old then.

MS: What's the site of the hot spring? Tell me about that. What was that at White Point?

YT: Well, the fellow named Tagami used to own it. I think it was a natural hot spring. As a kid, I didn't know what it was.

MS: Yes. But the water was hot?

YT: But health wise, it was okay. So, people used to come. There was a pool there too, you know.

MS: There was a resort. Was it called the Royal Palms? What was that?

YT: No. Royal Palm was a little bit north of it.

MS: Okay. So, what was the resort that your father was involved in?

YT: My father's resort around 1932 was called White Point Hot Springs and Resort, I think.

MS: White Point Resort, who came there? What did it look like?

YT: The White Point Resort, as far as I can remember, had a hotel and restaurant beside the hot springs. I remember as a kid, I used to sell hot dogs. Every Sunday, mostly every Sunday, various Japanese organizations used to have their picnics there. That's where I used to sell my hot dogs and stuff. Mostly, it was during June or July. Also, the Japanese organization, I guess that was their favorite place for the picnic. They all came and went to the seashores and –

MS: So, that was a hotel for Japanese?

YT: Well, actually is.

MS: When did it end? When did the resort close?

YT: Well, like I said, I think they didn't operate it too long, maybe two or three years. Then my father went back to Terminal Island. Let's see, I can't remember now. I was twelve years old then. Prior to that, he used to have a Japanese fish cannery called LA Seafood with all Japanese and investors. After that, he came to White Point. So, yes, I was twelve. He passed away when he was fifty-one years old, 1933, I think, right after the Olympics. So, I had to – with my mother and two brothers went to Japan, took his remains to Japan.

MS: Then you came back after that?

YT: Yes. Then I went to San Pedro High School.

MS: Right. Did you come back to live on Terminal Island?

YT: Right.

MS: Yes. You're twelve years old, what are your earliest memories of Terminal Island? Can you tell me some stories of what it was like to grow up? Who your friends were? What did you do on Terminal Island?

YT: Well, all I can remember is playing marbles. There was a Japanese school we had to go. We were forced to go. But let me tell you the truth, we didn't even know – we didn't even learn anything. We just went because our parents told us we have to learn Japanese too. So, after school we went to Japanese school. After Japanese school, we had certain gangs. There was Tuna Street. There was a place called Hokkaido. Hokkaido in Japan is way up north. It was in a grammar school. Mostly, we played at the grammar school. At nighttime, they had lights on the tennis court. We play softball or handball. Everybody knows each other. So, we couldn't do anything wrong. Yes. When we had a club named the Buccaneers. We started a dance party one night or so many times, maybe months, we sponsor a dancing party at the Japanese school. Here, the Issei people, issei ladies, they come and peek through the window. The next day, they have to go to work at the cannery. So, heck, it was not mechanized. So, they had to cut the sardine with their knives. Here, all they had to think about was gossip. So, there was Yukio was dancing with who. It was that kind of community. Anyway, we couldn't do anything wrong.

MS: Were you speaking English, Japanese, or a combination?

YT: Well, actually, it's combination like. We were speaking Japanese and English, a combination language. It was a typical language because we used to call it Terminal Island lingo. Well, like when we say, "you", we say *yura*. Allow me, you people see, and "me" *mira*. So, a lot of people don't want to say when we're talking like that *yura* and *mira*, see. One day, I was at, I think in Mount Boli or something. We went there and behind the rock, I heard that *yura, mira*. I look back and sure enough, it was a Terminal Islander. That kind of community, everybody knows each other.

MS: I understand that for people who are traditional Japanese, that the language was very rough.

YT: That's what I mean. That's why even the English and Japanese mix is a little rough. The outsider, it's hard for them to understand us. So, we had our own typical language, Terminal Island language, Japanese, so mixed Japanese and English, see.

MS: But it was also sort of crude and straightforward. It was not very elaborate.

YT: No. It was crude-like, right?

MS: Tell me that. Yes.

YT: Oh, the language was very crude when other people heard us.

MS: Wasn't there a song that was connected to –

YT: So, we started a Terminal Islanders Club in 1971. We got together. So, we have to do

something. So, we started this club. We named it the Terminal Islanders. Then they made a song. Well, this was this song called Yogore. Yogore means a rough guy or something like that. Yogore means dirty anyways. In Manzanar, they made this song called the Yogore song, and it describes the people of Terminal Island. Like, we're dark outside but clean inside. We're dirty outside maybe, but inside is clean. It's that kind of song.

MS: Can you sing it?

YT: Yogore, yogore –

MS: It's okay. Sing as much as you can remember. Do you remember all?

YT: No, I don't remember.

MS: So, anyway, let's go back to Terminal Island again. So, when you were growing up there and you were near the fish canneries.

YT: Right.

MS: Describe those. What were they like? What went on there?

YT: What do you mean?

MS: The fish canneries? The canneries.

YT: Well, there were about eight or nine fish canneries. The fish cannery, they furnished housing for you if you work for the cannery, see. Each family works for a certain cannery. They gave us housing, yes. Like my father, they used to own this Japanese LA Seafood and one Japanese cannery. So, we had a full house, complete house. But most of them had were divided into two. Two families lived in one shack.

MS: Who were your friends when you were growing up?

YT: All my friends were about the same age as me. We call it our gang. We had six fellows that were all the same age. As of now, only two of us are left, four of us passed away. Most of them were born in 1920, 1921.

MS: You have a name for your gang?

YT: No. No name, no. Just our gang, yes.

MS: Did you go to the beach and swim and –

YT: Oh, yes.

MS: Tell me about that.

YT: Well, there was the first beach, second beach and then the Brighton Beach. Mostly, we used to go swimming at the first beach. But other than that, we swam in Fish Harbor. It wasn't diluted like right now. But it was clean water. We used to dive in. We used to all swim around the fire department. Sometimes we used to get the hose and hose us and all that. We used to have a lot of fun when we were kids.

MS: What about all the ships coming in and out? Did you swim around those and see that too?

YT: The fishing boats?

MS: Yes. Or just all the boats.

YT: Well, inside the harbor are all fishing boats. But in the LA channel it was steam ships coming in from foreign countries, Japan, and all that.

MS: So, the Fish Harbor, describe that to me. What was that like? What did it look like and the activities that went on there?

YT: Well, there was a Japanese parents association, they call it the fukei-kai. They sponsor a movie, Japanese movie once a month, which was the only entertainment. I can remember 1933 of the March 10th earthquakes over in Long Beach, Compton. That time though, it was the night of the showing of the movie. It was lucky because a lot of people weren't in that hall. They had one hall called the Japanese Fisherman's Hall. Beside the Japanese Fisherman's Hall, there was a church and Buddhist Church and Baptist Church.

MS: So, tell me again the story of the earthquake. I mean, where were you and when did that happen?

YT: Well, see the earthquake, we were all in Terminal Island. If I remember, it was 1933, March 10th. It was my first experience of earthquakes. We didn't know what to do. So, what our family did was we were laying in that playground, in a school playground. Then the Navy came and said you guys better go to a higher spot because there might be a tidal wave, which we call tsunami now, that's Japanese tsunami. So, we carried as much as we can and went up to San Pedro Hills here, by the jail.

MS: So, you took the ferry across and –

YT: Yes, at that time. Then after that, we went to a friend's house in San Pedro, I remember. Then eventually we went to Los Angeles until April. That's after the war I'm talking about now.

MS: Oh, I thought with the earthquake. I was talking about the earthquake.

YT: Yes. Earthquake was 1933. Yes.

MS: So, do you remember when it happened? What did it feel like? What were you doing?

YT: Well, that was our first experience of an earthquake. But we're all surprised and kind of scared. It was pretty, pretty big.

MS: Did any buildings come down around you nearby?

YT: Well, not nearby. But in Long Beach and Compton it was pretty bad, yes.

MS: Let's go back to that movie theatre. Tell me about that again. What was this movie theatre and what was the schedule and –

YT: Well, we had a movie schedule, I mean, a theatre. Not a movie theatre, but a Japanese parents association. They call it the Japanese Fisherman's Hall. That's where they had the meetings and all that. But like every month they had some kind of entertainment, especially the Japanese movie from Japan. That was all silent movies. They had to have a narrator talk during the movie. That's when we learned what a samurai was, Japanese cowboy. We all look forward to the movie. But when we went to Japanese school, the Japanese teacher told us, "You're not supposed to go to that kind of movie and all that." But we all went, yes.

MS: Why didn't she want you to go?

YT: I don't know.

MS: Describe again, tell me about the movie that you used to see. Where did you show them? What went on when you went to the movies? What kind of movies were they?

YT: Well, like I said, every month we had a movie, a Japanese movie. Of course it wasn't talkie. But the kind of movie we enjoyed as a kid was Samurai. Samurai is a Japanese warrior. Of course, there were love stories and all kinds of movies that came to satisfy the adults and all that. But then if a samurai movie comes, we look forward to it. We even took our lunch to the movies. Then it was shown at the Japanese Fisherman's Hall. To get in there, we used to go help line up the chairs so we could get a free pass. Anyway, we sure look forward to the movies every month.

MS: Describe what went on, that there was a man telling a story.

YT: Oh, yes. This guy, they call it benshi in Japanese and he narrates the show. There were so many different benshi narrators that we always had a favorite one. In between, he sings. He imitates the ladies and men in their voices. Anyway, it was very interesting. We sure look forward to it.

MS: Now, did the benshi come with the movie or was he part of the community?

YT: No. That's his business, I guess. He brings imports, Japanese from Japan. It makes rounds all over the Japanese town, city. There weren't any Japanese theaters in – I don't think so. He made his rounds all over the town within the Japanese communities to show the movies, which

everybody looks forward to.

MS: What about American movies, did you see those too?

YT: Well, to see American movies, we had to go get on the ferry and come to San Pedro. There were, I think, forty years, the Globe Theatre, the Warner Brothers, the Cabrillo, and Strand. We used to go see these series like Tarzan and all that. This Globe Theatre specialized in cowboy pictures. We all liked cowboy pictures. So, I think every Saturday, we get 50 cents from our dad and went a long way. Yes, we had a hot dog coming back on the ferry. Yes, we had a lot of fun anyway.

MS: There was no benshi there?

YT: No. That was a regular movie. But it was a black and white, silent movie.

MS: So, when you started to go to school, you did Japanese school in Terminal Island, right?

YT: Yes. Right.

MS: How old were you when you started going to junior high school and where did you go?

YT: See, after sixth grade in Terminal Island, we had to go to junior high school, Richard Henry Dana in San Pedro. So, we took the ferry. When we used to go to junior high school, we used to walk. I don't know how many miles, a mile and a half maybe. But when we started going to high school, we all took the bus. I remember it cost us 3 cents for a ride to the school.

MS: When you came to junior high school, was your English very good so that you would have no problem with junior high school?

YT: Well, I didn't think we had trouble with English.

MS: What was it like going away from Terminal Island to go to school? Was that a little scary?

YT: No. It was kind of fun. Because, like I said, we used to walk through 6th Street and go to the school, Richard Henry Dana. We made a lot of friends, Slavonian and Italian boys.

MS: When you went to San Pedro when you weren't going to school, would you go there to shop? Or would you stay basically on Terminal Island? When you were not going to school, would you go to San Pedro for other things?

YT: No. Except when we played football or things like that at Toronto Field. They have these Navy football games every Saturday and during the half, they let us play football. So, we played the Caucasian boys, our friends at Toronto Field, for about fifteen minutes, half time. Then sometimes we go to see the Navies play.

MS: Did you ever go into Los Angeles to take the red car to Los Angeles?

YT: Yes. The only way to Los Angeles was there was an Alameda St. A very few people had cars then in Terminal Island, and only the businessmen, things like that. So, we took a ride. We went to Los Angeles a lot. But I had a friend that had a car. They always took us to Wrigley Field where they play the Pacific Coast League. We had our favorite teams, like Hollywood Stars and Los Angeles Angels and we look forward to going to the baseball games.

MS: Did you play sports?

YT: Yes. I played baseball for the San Pedro Skippers. That's our Japanese team and that's why we built that baseball ground. We were, I think we took Japanese league West Coast champion in 1941. We had a good sponsor, backup people, the businessmen and all that. So, they were going to take us to Japan. Yes. But then the war started and that was all gone. Yes. We were looking forward to going to Japan – the team.

MS: Do you remember December 7th –

YT: Yes.

MS: – 1941? What were you doing? Describe what was going on.

YT: You know what we were doing? To tell you the truth, our gang were playing poker. Then we heard on the radio that Pearl Harbor was bombed. At that time, we didn't know what Pearl Harbor was. It was Pearl Harbor. Then the next morning, early in the morning, a lot of FBI's came into Terminal Island. We didn't know what it was. But they checked every house. Eventually, all the fishermen that had fisherman's license were all taken in. They left the women and the kids in Terminal Island.

MS: What did you feel? Were you scared or confused?

YT: Well, I won't say scared, but I guess confused, because with all the men gone and they were on the sea, that was May or something. This Executive Order 9066 from President Roosevelt, we had to evacuate in forty-eight hours. That was something, I think. So, then we went to a friend in Los Angeles and stayed until we evacuated in April.

MS: Describe that scene. Was it chaos, people running around? What went on when you had only forty-eight hours to evacuate? Tell me, describe that.

YT: Well, it's hard to say. But then without the men folks, it was pretty hard. So, we had to help each other. Those that had trucks at that store, they helped us load things to where we went.

MS: Now you are twenty-one years old.

YT: No. Let's see that was 1941.

MS: 1941.

YT: Oh, yes. I was twenty-one, yes.

MS: Twenty-one years old.

YT: So, I was fishing then.

MS: Yes.

YT: After I graduated high school, during those days if you worked on land – I had a job at a grocery store. I was only paid about \$75 a month. So, one of my buddy's father said, "Let's go fishing." So, I went fishing, sardine fishing. Sardine fishing lasts for three weeks a month, one week is a full moon, you can't fish. So, fishermen, they work on their nets and stuff and in three weeks, I made about \$900. I got a \$900 check. Then I bought my mother a refrigerator and all that furniture stuff. Yes, that was pretty good.

MS: So, you're going to make a career being a fisherman. So, you decided you want to be a fisherman.

YT: Well in Terminal Island, if you don't fish, something was wrong. Because who's going to work on land for \$75 a month? So, all the young guys, especially us guys, we all went fishing, no choice because that was fast money.

MS: So, describe about what did a sardine fisherman do? When did you go out in the morning? What did you do when you got to get the tornado?

YT: Well, we usually go out in the morning, or it depends on the distance how far the fishing rod is. We wait until nighttime. Nighttime, no moon, so it's dark. You could see the fish in the water. So, then we put a net around the sardine. We get fifty to sixty tons a crack. Then we put it in our hatch. Then when we fill up the hatch, we bring it to the canners. I don't know how much a ton was then. But like I said, the first check I got was \$900.

MS: So, that was going to be your career. You're going to be a fisherman.

YT: Well, I didn't think about the future, just making money. Then I had an offer from a store to work. But after, my friend's father told me, "Let's go fishing." I just went for the ride first. But then he told me to stay as a full crew. So, that's when I started fishing. That's when I made my first money.

MS: What were the Japanese fishermen like? Did they stay together? Were they a group of people, kind of men. Were they quiet? Were they boisterous?

YT: Well, like most of the people on Terminal Island. They came from Wakayama Prefecture and Hiroshima. I know their family from Okinawa too, Hiroshima, Kumamoto, Wakayama, it's all fishing villages. So, that's where you start fishing, I think.

MS: What kind of men were they? Were they quiet, loud?

YT: Well, they're ordinary humans. But they were pretty strict on the fishing boat, the East side first generation. We have to wash dishes and all that. I went with my buddy – pardon.

MS: Well, tell me more about that when you say they were hard on you. What was discipline like on the boat? Tell me. Describe it to me. What did you have to do?

YT: Well, we had to pull up the nets. On our full moon, we worked on the net and all that. But after that, when I came out of the relocation center, I started fishing with another fellow. We went down to Mexico and down to South America to fish for tuna. I still kept on fishing.

MS: But after Pearl Harbor, the fishermen, Japanese fishermen couldn't fish anymore.

YT: No. They couldn't go out.

MS: Tell me about that.

YT: Well, like I understand though, right after war, the FBIs came in, they took in most of the fishermen. Then later, they checked on the fishing names, I think, on their licenses. The rest of the men folks were all taken. They were taken into Bismarck, North Dakota, I think. Then in April, middle of April, most of us Terminal Islanders, we went to Manzanar. After that, they were spread to other relocations in Hartman and Wyoming.

MS: Do you remember that day you had to leave for Manzanar? What was it like?

Yes. Well, we had to get on the train with the shade down. We didn't know where we were going. Yes. When we stopped here, it was Manzanar, a little bit off of the independence stuff.

MS: What were you feeling? Were you angry? Or were you confused? What would you feel about all this?

YT: I wasn't angry or confused or anything. This happened, I guess so. We're Japanese Americans, but still, I think that was a big mistake though, to tell you the truth. If they took only our folks, the ESA is different. But like us, we're citizens, we're born here. We're American citizens. So, I think Roosevelt – I hate to talk about the president, but he made a big mistake taking the Japanese Americans at that time. If this was only the Japanese nationals, I don't think it's bad. I mean, I don't feel any opposition to it. But when they took us citizens, I think that he made a big mistake.

MS: Unconstitutional, right?

YT: Unconstitutional. That's right.

MS: Yes. Now, when did you come back to San Pedro after the internment?

YT: Let's see, right after the war in 1945, I think. I don't know what month that was. Then we came to Long Beach. Well, most of the terminal islanders came to Long Beach. We were accommodated into a trailer court. You know trailer court? Eventually, they moved us into a Naval housing. After that, we started working. Then eventually, little by little, everybody starts buying their own home here.

MS: But Terminal Island was gone when you came back.

YT: Terminal Island was gone.

MS: When you came back, when you saw it, what did it look?

YT: Well, everything was gone. Well, when I got back to Terminal Island, of course we went to see what it looked like. But it was mostly a container base, nothing left of our homes and stuff. The cannery row, the Main Street in terminal was Tuna Street. Right off Tuna Street along that wharf was all canneries. We went to look there. But fishing boats, of course, we saw fishing boats. But nothing left, no sign of our homes. Everything was crushed, broken down.

MS: How did you feel about that? That's sad.

YT: We feel pretty sad, something missing. But there was our home sweet home, yes.

MS: Were you concerned about where you are going to go and live and how you're going to survive? Were you concerned about coming back and what people would think and all that?

YT: Actually, we never thought that way. We were just happy to get out of camp here. In camp, I think we spent our best years of our life there. Because we could have gone to college and all that. Eventually, people relocated back East. They couldn't come back to California. But I stayed until the end. I came out with my mother and my two brothers. Like I said, we all came to Long Beach and ended up in a trailer court.

MS: Well, describe that trailer court. What was it like? It was all Japanese from the internment camps.

YT: Yes.

MS: So, what was that community like?

YT: Well, it was a lot of trailer courts, a bunch, a block, I think or so. Mostly, like I said, it was Terminal Island people. So, we all knew each other, like it was back to Terminal Island. But living conditions are all different.

MS: So, what did you do for work? You went back to being a fisherman and that was in Long Beach?

YT: Yes. That was that was from San Pedro.

MS: Oh, so you became a fisherman of San Pedro.

YT: Yes. This, my skipper, he was from Monterey. But he ran a boat called the Western Explorer. He told me, "Let's go." So, I got on. That time we specialized in fishing in Mexico and South America. We went down to Panama, up to Panama.

MS: So, how long did you do that?

YT: Let's see. I don't know whether I quit, but I did it maybe four years. Then I quit. Yes. Then I started a Japanese grocery store in Long Beach called the Oriental Food Market. Because most of the Terminal Island people settled in the Long Beach area. I started this Oriental Food Market. It was pretty good business. Because a lot of these Japanese war brides are on. The Japanese people, they had a pretty good business then.

MS: How long did you do that?

YT: I think I quit in 1982. I think I sold the store in 1982. Then I sold it to – I don't know what nationality was, but they continued operating the store. But they didn't last long. Because in our store, it was a little different. We had fish beside meat and all that, especially Japanese, but you know sashimi is – they eat that tuna. So, we used to go to market in San Pedro, buy fish and sell fish too. So, it was pretty good.

MS: So, you said that it was in good business because of all the Japanese war brides who were coming.

YT: Well, there was a lot of war brides that came from Japan too, see. So, they were good customers, you know.

MS: So, then what did you do next after you sold the store?

YT: After I sold the store – gee, let me think. After I sold the store, what did I do? I retired. Yes, I retired. I went to Japan one time to see my cousins and relatives, or my mother. This is the second time I went, I think.

MS: So, you lived all your life, most of your life in San Pedro?

YT: Terminal Island mostly, yes.

MS: What is this place? People have never heard of it.

YT: I don't know.

MS: Tell me, what do they need to know about it? What was Terminal Island?

YT: Well, Terminal Island, I mean, I don't know. All of a sudden, they got popular. Just maybe

two weeks before they showed that movie in Warner Brothers here, we went to one of the junior high school, I think, to show that movie. The kids, about sixth to eighth grade kids, they never heard of Terminal Island. So, when they saw the movie, they asked us all kinds of questions. They even wrote a letter to me, thanking me and one of these days I'm going to go there and all that, very cute.

MS: Well, tell me now, you have a chance, here's your audience.

YT: Yes.

MS: What was Terminal Island? What was it? Why is it important? Why should people know about it?

YT: Well, I don't know why they want to know about it. But four of us went from the Terminal Islanders and we had them question us.

MS: I mean, you can tell me now though. Tell me why Terminal Island is important?

YT: Well, that was where I was born. My furusato, that's what you call it, furusato, home sweet home. Yes. It was like a lost paradise to me. Yes.

MS: It was lost.

YT: Yes.

MS: Because it didn't survive. But it was important because that was one of the parts of the biggest fishing ports in the world.

YT: Right.

MS: Tell me about that.

YT: I think the Japanese fishermen, they had a lot of to do with the improvement of fishing too in the United States. Because they were really – I say a good fisherman. Not much, there was Norwegian people too, but Slavonian and Italian people beside the Japanese people. But I think the majority was Japanese in Terminal Island.

MS: There were other Japanese communities. There was the Prados, the farming communities. Did you go and visit and know people there?

YT: Well, the only, the only thing we know about farming is when we went to school, in junior high school. People – boys and girls, come from the Apollo-Ridge where, you know, they were used to farm, tomatoes and lettuce, whatever. That's when we all met. Actually, we all stuck together, Terminal Island bunch.

MS: So, did you get together after you met? Or did everyone stay in their own communities?

YT: What's that?

MS: The Palos Verdes.

YT: Well, they're all separate. Although, we know each other. I guess they went back to San Pedro. I don't know. Most of the Terminal Islanders, like I said, came to Long Beach first. Then eventually, they moved here and there.

MS: Well, I think we're just about out of time. I want to take a picture of you before we leave. But are there any stories that you want to tell me that I haven't asked questions about?

YT: For instance, what?

MS: Yes. Give me a story. You have a story that you want to tell, that you like to talk about the old days, Terminal Island and the people that you knew and the things you did?

YT: Well, as a kid, we played sword fights. Because we've seen the samurai pictures every month. Of course, we liked to play cowboy and hide and seek and all that. But we used to make swords and play sword fight instead of cowboy. I can remember when I was a kid. Then after I grew up, I enjoyed playing baseball with the San Pedro Skippers.

MS: What position did you play?

YT: I played second base or third base, yes, infield.

MS: So, who were your baseball heroes in those days? Who would you look up to as a baseball hero?

YT: Well, there's a lot of our friends, like Frank Takuchi and Ich Hashimoto and (Tio Kura?). They were real good players. But we had a chance to travel all over, see, all over the West Coast. So, that was something, just playing baseball. We got to see a lot of different places, Japanese community. They all had a team, like Fresno, Lodi, and Guadalupe. We all played there. I think on May Day, we had an invitation over in Terminal Island at the Skippers Field. They all came from the north to play. We had series of Japanese league. We were always on the cups. Then, like I said, we had a chance to go to Japan that year, but Pearl Harbor spoiled everything.

MS: You said you went to the Hollywood Stars and the Angel games. Were there Angels and Stars players that you admired and big leaguers?

YT: Yes, Hollywood Stars. I remember this pitcher, Frank Shellenback. He's a spitball pitcher and Carlisle and all that and Angels. I think it's Haney, Haney's brother or something, I'm playing Fred Haney. We remember all the names, but I forgot now. But it was good to go see baseball. It was at Wrigley Field on Avalon.

MS: Right. The angels – yes. All right. Great.

[end of transcript]