



Lesson One

Lily Fujimoto Taka Oral History

Lily Fujimoto was pregnant with her first child when she was relocated with her family to Poston, Arizona. She left Poston and moved with her husband, brother and daughter to Des Moines, Iowa, before returning to Riverside in the 1980's.

Lily Fujimoto (LF) is being interviewed by Allison Campbell (AC) of the [Riverside Metropolitan Museum](#)

AC: So this is 1941 and you're in Rosemead. Do you remember where you were when you heard the news of Pearl Harbor?

LT: Yes, I do remember. We had gone to a wedding in Los Angeles. When we heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed, I could hardly believe it. The FBI came because there were Japanese people gathered at this restaurant, and he told us to leave immediately. So we did. My folks were there, too. They had to drive back to Riverside, and on the way back, in Ontario, they were stopped. They asked for identification, and my father said he's going to Riverside. I think they were going to arrest him, but they let him go and he was able to go back to Riverside.

We went back to Rosemead at that time, but we heard that we were going to have to be evacuated. President Roosevelt, F.D. Roosevelt, was the person who signed this document saying that all people of Japanese ancestry are going to have to be moved away from the West Coast. They gave us a curfew of so many to get back at home by a certain time, and you could not travel beyond the certain number of miles, very few miles. So we just had to wait until the time for us to leave.

We left. We took a Greyhound bus at 5th and Market, I think it was. When we were leaving, a group of ladies from – I think it was _____ – brought coffee and donuts for us, to see us off. We thought that was very nice. So we boarded the bus and we were – oh, they wouldn't tell us where we were going. We had to pull our shades down. And we landed in Poston, Arizona. It was a hot day, and when we got down on the ground – the camp had just been made, so the dirt had not been settled – our feet would sink down into the sand up to our ankles. It was terrible.

We were assigned to our different apartments in the barracks. There were five apartments to a barracks. Then we were given a cot. Well, the cot was always there, but we were given ticking to fill with straw to put on the cot as a mattress. So we had to do that. The floorboards were hastily made, and they had spaces about a half an inch between the boards. Every day the dust storm would come and blow the dust into the apartment through the floorboards. It was terrible. It was not a very pleasant experience.

AC: Was it scary to be pregnant with your first child in the midst of all this upheaval?

LT: We were all barracked in the same place, and we were all experiencing the same thing, so it was not difficult. We just had to put up with all the inconveniences of camp. Like, in the latrine, first there was no partition between the toilets. That was awful. So my sister and I when we went there would take a sheet and hold it up between us. Later, though, they did put up partitions for us, so that was good. One lady from our block would volunteer to do the cleaning of the latrine every day, which was very nice. But the showers were gang showers. There was nothing in between the showers. They were just one after another. That was terrible.

AC: Not a lot of privacy then.

LT: No privacy, at first.