



Lesson One

Haru Inaba Kuromiya Oral History

Before her family was forced to move to the Manzanar Relocation Center, Haru was a student at Riverside Polytechnic High School. She graduated from high school while incarcerated at Crystal City, Texas, and returned to Riverside with her family after the war.

Haru Kuromiya (HK) is being interviewed by Allison Campbell (AC) of the [Riverside Metropolitan Museum](#)

HK: From Riverside, we went to Los Angeles with my aunts and my grandparents because my uncle was also taken by the FBI at the same time my father was. We all wanted to stay together, so we all moved to Los Angeles to be with my uncle's wife's family. They were living in Los Angeles. So we all moved to Los Angeles so that we could all be evacuated together. I don't remember how long we stayed there, but we managed to stay together, and so we all went to Manzanar together.

AC: Did you know at that time where your father was? And your uncle, did you know where he was?

HK: We visited them one time in – I believe it was in a camp in Tujunga. We were able to visit him just once. Then after that, we didn't know where he was going. And then we went to Manzanar.

AC: Do you remember anything about that visit? Do you remember what you talked about or what kind of conditions he was living in?

HK: He [my father] seemed to be fine. I don't remember too much about it. I believe we had to talk through a fence. So much of that period of my life I blocked out, so I just don't remember.

AC: In addition to selling the chickens, do you remember any other things that your siblings and your grandparents and you all did to prepare to evacuate, to prepare to leave Riverside and your home?

HK: I think we sold our car. I think we sold as much as we could. But, because we were able to keep our farm, I think we stored a lot of the things in the barn. I think we left a lot of things as they were because we rented the houses. I believe we had two houses at the time. But we stored as much as we could. By then, the chickens were gone, and we just left the crops as they were. There was nothing we could do about them anyway.

AC: Do you remember what you brought with you when you packed?

HK: **Well, we weren't allowed to carry very much. I think I just packed the necessities. I don't remember taking anything special. We were only allowed to take what we could carry.**

AC: Do you remember saying goodbye to anybody in Riverside, your friends or anybody?

HK: **I went back to school one day right before we left to say goodbye to my best friend. She was also Japanese, so she was leaving, too. I really felt very sad about leaving my Riverside friends and going to Los Angeles because we had never gone out of Riverside very much. In that time of your life, your school friends are really the friends that you have. I think I felt worse about leaving Riverside than leaving Los Angeles even.**

AC: In the conversations that your mother and your grandparents were having with your aunts and making arrangements, do you ever remember them discussing the politics of what was happening, or the government, or any kind of feelings about the president?

HK: **Not at all, really. I really don't remember. Especially with my mother, we never talked about things like that.**

AC: Why don't you think at this very intense moment nobody was questioning what was happening to your family?

HK: **Well, my parents were Isseis and they weren't citizens. They had absolutely no say about politics, about the injustice of being evacuated. And then my father was gone and my mother was pregnant. She had my youngest brother just about the time we were evacuating. For her it was a very hard time. All of a sudden she had all these children to look after. So the politics were just not that important to her.**

AC: From Los Angeles did you go to Santa Anita? Did you go someplace, or did you go directly to Manzanar?

HK: **We went directly to Manzanar.**

AC: Then you didn't know where your father was. Did you think he would be meeting you there?

HK: **No. I don't remember expecting to meet him there at that time. We didn't know where he went.**

AC: Can you describe – can you remember the day that you were evacuated from L.A. and your feelings of the actual departure?

HK: **You know, I don't remember much about that time. I think I blocked out a lot. I remember being on a bus, and there was a man – I believe he was in uniform, and he was shouting. He says, "Why am I being evacuated? Why am I**

being taken away from my home? I have fought for this country." He was just very, very – But other than that, I don't remember too much. I remember more the train ride from Manzanar to Crystal City because then we knew we were going to meet our father, and I remember being excited about that.

AC: Do you remember your first impressions of Manzanar?

HK: It was nighttime, we couldn't see very much. I remember walking into this barracks that was hot. It was just – there was just nothing in there. Kind of just depressing. I remember walking away from it and taking a walk and almost getting lost. I really – I just was stunned. It was just so different.

AC: Like you were in prison? Is that what it felt like?

HK: I didn't think of it that way. I might have later on, but that night it was just getting settled. It wasn't much fun.

AC: Did your family stay in a larger dorm? Did your family have any privacy?

HK: We had a little bit more room than some other families that had less children. I believe that they were divided into how many people were in your family. But it was just there. The floor was just slats of wood, and you could see between the slats. As time went on, we made it more like a home as much as we could.

AC: How?

HK: We had a friend that made furniture for us. The people in the camp, they would go off and scrounge for wood and they would make furniture. I have a bookcase over there that my friend had made, that I have saved. We partitioned it off with yardage, with cloth between the beds, like that. But it's kind of sad because the walls were so thin we could hear the neighbors. It was not exactly just the greatest place, but we made the best of it.

AC: Did your mother cook in the cabin?

HK: No. We went to the mess hall to eat. In our barracks there was no bathroom. There was a community washroom and a bathroom, and then there was the mess hall where everybody ate together. My mother – they gave her milk for the baby. I remember, afterwards, as time went on, they started a farm outside the camp. They were allowed to do that. I remember a friend of ours worked on the farm, and they would bring us vegetables. What I remember most is the bean sprouts. My mother was able to cook that on our wood stove, and they would cook that. I remember at that time I didn't like it, but I remember my friend would bring it and then my mother would cook it, and they loved it. They enjoyed that. But, other than that, we didn't have much extra food.