OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW

WITH

Toshio Inahara, M.D.

Interview conducted July 16, 2000

by

Tadaaki Hiruki, M.D.

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SUMMARY

The interview begins with Dr. Toshio Inahara talking about his early years and his first trip to Japan with his parents when he was only three years old. His father, Tetsunosuke Inahara, was a trained *kashiya*, and made Japanese confections for the large Japanese American communities in Portland, Oregon and Tacoma, Washington. After his fourth son was born, Tetsunosuke decided to move to the country to remove his children from city influences. They settled in Hillside, Oregon, and began work as strawberry farmers. Dr. Inahara describes the farming life and the family's inability to pay off debts during the long years of the Depression. Finally turning a profit, the family built a home in Hillside, which was completed in December of 1941. In May of the following year, the family was forced to leave their home, and the Inaharas relocated to Ontario, Oregon.

Dr. Inahara left Oregon in 1944 to attend the University of Wisconsin; upon graduation, he was accepted at the University of Oregon Medical School. He received his M.D. in 1950 and interned in surgery at St. Vincent's Hospital before securing a fellowship in peripheral vascular surgery with Robert R. Linton at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Inahara returned to Portland in 1957 as the state's first trained vascular surgeon, where he opened a private practice and joined the surgery faculty at UOMS. He talks about the early days of vascular surgery and its slow acceptance as a medical specialty. A pioneer, he developed his own blood vessel bank for transplants, and founded the Pacific Northwest Vascular Society.

In the second half of the interview, Dr. Inahara talks at length about Japan, Japanese Americans, and his own experiences as a member of a minority group. He discusses the internment camp at Minidoka, Idaho, where his wife was held during World War II. He remembers some instances of "racial incidents," but notes that he never felt any hostility from fellow students or colleagues at UOMS. He recalls an early trip he made to Japantown in Portland, and describes life as a strawberry farmer. Finally, he shares his observations on Japanese American life, contrasting it with the Chinese American culture, and highlights some of his own interests in Japanese art and culture.

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Interview with Toshio Inahara, M.D. Interviewed by Tadaaki Hiruki, M.D. July 16, 2000 Site: Multnomah Club Begin Tape 1, Side 1

HIRUKI: This is an interview with Dr. Toshio Inahara for the OHSU Oral History Project on sixteen July, year 2000, Sunday afternoon, at the Multnomah Club in Portland.

For starters, we'll get your affirmation that you understand that this interview is for the historical record and not a commercial or media interview.

INAHARA: Yes, I understand that this is for historical preservation and will be in a repository at the Oregon Health Sciences University, right?

HIRUKI: Great. Thank you. And thank you for doing this interview.

The idea of oral history is to get the *who*, the *what*, the *why*, *when*, and *how*. I guess the best place to start today would be with the *who*, and perhaps you could tell me who you are, where you were born.

INAHARA: Yes. My name is Toshio Inahara. I was born in Seattle, Washington, to *issei* parents, Tetsunosuke Inahara and Tei. We lived in Seattle perhaps one or two years, after which I believe we came to Portland, very briefly, for another year or two, and then returned to Japan with my parents, at which time there were two of us siblings.

HIRUKI: What year was that?

INAHARA: This was probably 1923 or '4.

HIRUKI: And the reasons for going back?

INAHARA: I think it was just to visit. My parents were visiting. And while we were there, probably less than a year, a third sibling was born, and shortly thereafter we returned to Seattle, probably about 1925.

HIRUKI: What do you remember of that trip?

INAHARA: I remember my grandparents. I think I was just three years old at the time. The city where we stayed with my grandparents was the city of Gifu. I very vividly remember their home. It had an inner courtyard. But also the most distinctive feature that I remember is that my grandparents made *amakasa* [umbrellas]. I remember seeing those.

They had a large room in which they would dry the completed umbrella, because it was oiled. The other thing I remember is how hot it was in Japan. That's why I assumed that we stayed through at least a summer and fall season. I remember walking through the village streets, and I think at the time Gifu was not a very large city. But after my third brother was old enough to travel, we came back to Seattle.

HIRUKI: And how did you travel?

INAHARA: We traveled by ship, and that was quite a trip.

HIRUKI: How long did that take?

INAHARA: That took two weeks. We traveled on the three ships called the *Marus*. The *Hikaru Maru*, and there were two others. I just can't remember the names of them offhand. But that was a very stormy ride through the North Pacific. I know my mother was seasick most of the time.

HIRUKI: How did the kids pass the time?

INAHARA: Well, we played on the decks and down in the main hall and so on. We children didn't have any problems.

But after we returned to Seattle, my father—he had been in America. He first came here in 1907. He came to Washington, but he first arrived in Mexico and then traveled to Washington, and I presume by ship, because I just can't feature anyone traveling by land at that time from Mexico to Seattle. And the reason he came, initially, was that his older brother was already here and he was working in a lumber mill, so that's what my father did initially.

After at least two years working as a logger, working in a sawmill, he returned to Japan, and I'm not clear what he did during this period until he returned to the United States, but I do know that he took an apprenticeship as a *kashiya*.

HIRUKI: Which is?

INAHARA: *Kashiya*. Because when he came back he first worked for a *kashiya* in Seattle, a place called [Sagamia?]. Then, after a brief period there, he came to Portland to help start the *kashiya* here in Portland.

HIRUKI: For the non-Japanese readers of this, could you explain what a kashiya is?

INAHARA: *Kashiya* is a Japanese confection, and he was thoroughly trained that he made everything, Japanese confections.

He helped start the Fugetsu here in Portland, and after a short period here we moved to Tacoma, Washington, where he opened his own store, which was also called the Fugetsu; and the store was located—the address, as I remember, was 1510 Broadway Street, and I can vividly remember the store. He had four display cases where he displayed all of his confections. In the back, I remember the work area where he had ovens, grills. He had the *mochi* pounding machines. He had a big, open floor sink where he would wash all the rice for *mochigomi* and *azuki*, and there were lima beans and things like that. And he had two gas burners with big pots that he would cook these beans in. He made all kinds: *omanju*, *yokan*, all kinds of *okashi*, *dipodama*, *kakimochi*, *sukomochi* for the New Year's. At any rate, he was in business, had a very successful business.

HIRUKI: Who were the customers?

INAHARA: The customers were all Japanese, because there was quite a large population of Japanese in Tacoma. Not only that, but there were many Japanese farmers locally that came into the store. And he would also go out to the farms and take the *kashiya* out there to sell.

I remember in 1930, he purchased his first automobile, which was a 1930 Model A Ford, a four-door sedan. It was a light green color. He learned to drive, but also my mother learned to drive, and both of them drove cars, until they were old.

While living in Tacoma, his fourth son arrived, so he had four children, all boys, and he decided that he would like to have his children brought up in the country, away from the influence of the cities. So he made a sacrifice, gave up his business, and he moved to Oregon. And this was in 1931.

HIRUKI: What was the city environment that he wanted to get away from?

INAHARA: He just didn't want his children brought up in the city.

HIRUKI: Were there some negative aspects?

INAHARA: Well, there wasn't anything in particular, but he felt that the city influence was not good. He himself was brought up out in the country, you see, so he knew what the country life was like. I think it was a major sacrifice for him to make, to do something like this, when he had a very successful business and he had been trained to be a real artist, because he would—I remember he would make *omanju* in the form of flowers, fruits; and in the *yokan*, he would put in drawings in the *yokan* that would be even like Matsue, with the mountains at Tsuru, and these were just really beautiful. So he was a real artist. And even to this day I cannot find *omanju* of the quality that he used to make. I can go to California, and the *omanju* is not the same, because, you know, I was brought up knowing what was the best.

At any rate, we moved to Oregon to a place called Hillside, which is about thirty-five miles west of Portland, and he rented a farm out there through a friend, who was also from the same *ken* [Japanese prefecture].

HIRUKI: Which ken was that?

INAHARA: Fuji Gifu ken. He helped us start the farm and grow strawberries. My father had no experience doing this kind of work, and yet he ventured to take up something that was entirely new. We moved just at the height of the Depression, and times were very, very difficult. He raised strawberries over thirty acres, which is a big acreage. Because of the Depression we were not able to sell our crops, and, as a result, after our harvest my father and myself—and I was just ten at the time, maybe going on eleven—we went out to work on other farms, especially out toward the east of Portland, to a place called Gresham. We would work out there as farm laborers. And the wage that we were paid at that time was ten cents to fifteen cents an hour. I very distinctly remember that. And that's the way we supported ourselves during the Depression.

But he continued to farm. Strawberries—plants would last three or four years, after which you have to replant at another site. So we had to move around to find the farms. Of course, these were all rented farms. And, finally, he first had success in 1937. Up until then we were in debt, all the years that we worked and farmed. We were in debt continually.

However, my father did go back to Japan in 1932, I believe, because that's when his mother passed away, so he went back to Japan at that time. He continued to go back to Japan every year because his older brother had left in his will a fortune that he wanted to use to build a Buddhist temple in his village, and since he passed away he asked my father to oversee the building of this temple. So he had to go back every year to see that this was done, together with his older brother's wife. The two of them finally completed the temple and gave it to the village of Shimoda, which is on the Nagara River.

HIRUKI: And how had his brother been so successful?

INAHARA: His older brother was successful because he went to Ch⁻ osen and he purchased a lot of land, and he was involved in the Korean politics at that time, so he purchased land that was valuable, and he became very rich. So he built this very large Buddhist temple and donated it to the village. And it still exists. We go back and go to the temple every time we go back to Japan.

So that is kind of a background up until about 1937. I graduated from high school, Hillsboro High School. Initially, we went to high school in Forest Grove, for my freshman year. And I played a lot of sports in grade school. I went to a grade school that was one room, had one teacher, and she taught eight grades, from first grade to the eighth grade. And in the whole school there were about thirty kids, thirty children. So with my brothers—two of my other brothers and myself were the nucleus of the baseball team. We had girls on our team, and then our grade school would play other grade schools, so we had sort of a grade school baseball league, you might say. But at any rate, I played high school baseball freshman year, and I was elected the freshman class president. We then had to move to Hillsboro because my father moved his farm, and I graduated from Hillsboro High School in 1938. I was the class valedictorian.

From there I went to the University of Oregon for one year, and my father wanted to build a home. We had purchased some property just outside the city of Hillsboro. So I dropped out of school and acted as the general contractor to build this home. I hired the carpenters and purchased all the necessary materials and equipment and furnaces and appliances and so on and finally completed this home.

HIRUKI: This was what year?

INAHARA: This was in 1941. And just as we moved into this home in December of 1941, the event occurred, so that we were forced to move from this new home in May of 1942. We were still farming; we had sixty acres of strawberries at that time. In May the crop was just about ready to harvest, and we lost our entire year's work and could not harvest this crop. We were forced to move out. But fortunately for us I was able to obtain what's called a "travel permit." This took a lot of red tape. I was in Portland almost every day at some federal office. We were one of the three or four families who received a permit to travel, because travel was restricted then. You couldn't go anywhere. So we had a large truck, a ton-and-ahalf truck, and a car, so we loaded up whatever we could on the two vehicles and moved to eastern Oregon, to Ontario.

HIRUKI: This was outside the exclusion zone?

INAHARA: This was outside the restricted area.

We rented a small shack, and there were five sons and my parents, the seven of us. And we worked as common farm labor for a year, and finally, toward the end of that year, we were able to find some land to rent. I was able to get a permit to purchase a tractor, because all kinds of vehicles, tractors and automobiles, trucks were all restricted. You could not buy them without a permit because of the shortage. But I was fortunate to be able to get a permit to buy a tractor, so we had the basic equipment that was needed for the farm. So we began farming on our own at that time, and this was back in 1943. We farmed thirty acres, initially.

In 1944 I decided to go back to school. By that time, September of 1944, we had a large acreage of produce—onions and sugar beets—ready to harvest, and I had received acceptance to go to the University of Wisconsin. I was very hesitant to leave the farm because I was mainly the person who ran the farm and I had all the responsibility. So I was very reluctant to leave this in the hands of my parents and my younger brothers, but my parents coaxed me to go because they felt education was of prime importance.

So I remember in about mid-September I got on the train to Chicago; and the thing that stood out about that trip was that as I was going through Wyoming we went through a snowstorm, and here it was mid-September. But at any rate, I arrived in Chicago; I transferred to a train to Madison, Wisconsin, and arrived there. And I think the first few weeks I found lodging at the YMCA building on the campus, so I stayed there until I found a rooming place in an engineering fraternity house, so I stayed there for the rest of the period.

I continued my undergraduate education from 1944 to 1946. I went through the summer quarters and all, stayed there continuously. And, of course, this was basic sciences, premedical curriculum. I applied at the medical school in Oregon, in Portland, and also at the University of Wisconsin.

HIRUKI: Oregon because you wanted to come home?

INAHARA: Yes. Yes, I wanted to get back to Oregon.

I was accepted at both the University of Wisconsin and University of Oregon. I was not even asked to come in for an interview. I was very fortunate to be accepted just on my record. I think one of the main reasons was that the faculty at the University of Oregon at that time had several graduates from the University of Wisconsin, so they knew that Wisconsin was a good school to come from.

So at any rate, during my two and a half years staying in Madison I received a state scholarship, because I couldn't afford to pay for my tuition otherwise. And I worked at night and on weekends at Rayovac Corporation. They make batteries, as you might remember. And of course, for my board I worked at various sorority houses and the women's dormitory. I washed dishes and I bused, was a waiter, and I got all my meals working. And I got enough spending money working at Rayovac. So when I finished in June of 1946, I didn't have enough money to come back to Portland, so I hitchhiked all the way from Madison, Wisconsin, to Portland.

HIRUKI: What was that like?

INAHARA: It took me one week. I hitchhiked all the way out.

HIRUKI: People would pick you up, no problem?

INAHARA: Well, I was fortunate, because when you're traveling, of course, with a small suitcase, you put the university logo on the suitcase, which really is very helpful because they know that you're a college student. So, fortunately, I didn't have any difficulties, except that it took, what, five days, and I would sleep in bus depots and train stations. But at any rate, I came back to the farm and worked on the farm until school started in September.

HIRUKI: This was still in Ontario?

INAHARA: Still in Ontario, my parents were.

Then I came and finished four years at the University medical school here. I recall that in our class, the class of 1950, there were many veterans from the war, and so we had a cross

section of older people in our group, and, of course, I was one of the younger ones. But we had a number of officers who had been in the Army, the Air Force, the Navy; and I can remember there was some resentment from some of the people who had fought in the Pacific theater.

HIRUKI: Toward you?

INAHARA: Yes. You could sense that they had some feelings about the Japanese. But, nevertheless, we got along fine. We never did have any problems.

The other unusual thing was that we had eight girls in our class.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1/Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

HIRUKI: Interview with Dr. Toshio Inahara, side two, tape one.

You were just talking about the makeup of your medical school class.

INAHARA: Medical school was all work and no play, it seems. I lived in a basement in a single room that was just large enough to hold a desk and a bed, a single bed, and the bathroom was just down the hall.

HIRUKI: Where in Portland was that?

INAHARA: That was up on the Hill. For my meals I worked in a restaurant, which was just close by on the Hill.

Then, I finally graduated in 1950, but, in the meanwhile, I was married in 1949, and my wife supported me during the last year.

HIRUKI: What did she do?

INAHARA: She was the secretary in the radiology department, and she stayed there until we finished.

HIRUKI: And that was how you met, during your medical school training?

INAHARA: Actually, we had met earlier in Chicago, because on holidays and between terms I would go to Chicago, since I had some friends there, and that's where we happened to meet.

HIRUKI: Friends of friends?

INAHARA: Yes.

Then I interned at St. Vincent's Hospital. I had quite a difficult time deciding where to apply for an internship, as I was mainly interested in surgery. But after talking to a number of surgeons who were in practice, and also because of the fact that I started working at St. Vincent's during my junior year as an extern, I became familiar with a number of doctors, and finally decided to stay at St. Vincent's, where I did my five years of training.

After the general surgery training, I was very fortunate and received a fellowship in vascular surgery, which was a very—the specialty was in its infancy, just beginning. I was given a fellowship at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston under a professor there, a Harvard professor, Robert R. Linton, and I spent thirteen months with him, strictly in vascular surgery.

HIRUKI: This would have been nineteen...?

INAHARA: This was in 1956, '56-'57, after which I returned to Portland and began my own private practice.

It was, of course, very difficult at first. I worked in the emergency department on a salary to cover my expenses. I also applied for staff membership at all the hospitals in Portland, like Good Samaritan, Emanuel, Providence, Physicians and Surgeons. I also applied on the staff at the University, where I made vascular rounds with an older vascular surgeon, who did mainly venous surgery, because there arterial surgery was unknown at that time. And I continued my practice, which gradually grew. As a matter of fact, I developed my own blood vessel bank. At that time we were using arterial homografts, and I would harvest the arteries from cadavers and put them in antibiotic solution, keep them sterile, and use them for transplant.

Actually, I was the first trained vascular surgeon in Oregon, and the general surgeons at that time felt that—they just didn't believe in vascular surgery at that time. I can remember talking to some of the general surgeons that thought that. Well, I don't know what they really thought [laughs], but they certainly didn't think that this was a specialty. But as it turned out, it has become a highly specialized field of surgery now.

HIRUKI: So is that what you attribute the difficulty in setting up to, just their lack of receptiveness to the new specialty?

INAHARA: Yes, right, because there was no one trained in vascular surgery in Oregon at that time, and there were very few elsewhere. And, of course, vascular surgery was mainly done on the East Coast, in Boston, New York, Chicago, Detroit, places like that.

HIRUKI: What, during your school training, do you attribute your interest in surgery to?

INAHARA: Well, what happened was that during my residency in general surgery we had some vascular cases, and they were things like ruptured aortic aneurysm. Nothing could

be done for them. One of the interesting cases that drew my attention to vascular surgery and vascular research was a case that came into the emergency. This was a ten year old boy who got into a brotherly fight with his older brother, who threw a pair of scissors, and the point of the scissors transected his common femoral artery. Actually, it was a puncture, so the artery had quit bleeding.

I remember the general surgeon, Dr. Dean Seabrook, who took this case, he was a surgeon who had been through World War II and was very experienced. And his approach to this injury was to ligate the artery, because arterial repairs were not known at that time; and he said that the important thing about ligating the artery was to wait until the collateral circulation developed. So we waited for several days, perhaps even a week, and then he took this young boy to surgery and ligated the femoral artery.

This stirred some interest, and I began looking into the literature about arterial injuries, and then eventually heard about the vascular surgery that was being done at the Massachusetts General Hospital. And through friends, and also through my preceptors, I was able to make contact with Dr. Linton and, with the recommendations I received, I received this appointment. I think this is one of the greatest thrills of my life, to have received that appointment for the Massachusetts General Hospital. I spent thirteen months with Dr. Linton, came back to Portland and began my practice, and I continued practice until 1994, at which time I retired. I started my practice in 1957, so a period of thirty-seven years. I think I was very fortunate that I was in this field.

To look back over my career, if I were to do it over again, I would still do the same. Vascular surgery is so fascinating. I think I was very lucky to have been in this field. I've made some contributions; developed certain techniques in endarterectomies; I've had some publications. Also, I devised a carotid shunt, got a patent on it, and, with a partner, I developed a corporation to manufacture the shunt, and it is still sold under my name, although I don't own the corporation anymore. I sold it to another corporation. But being one of the pioneers in this field, I was able to make some contributions, I think. And it was fun; I really enjoyed vascular surgery.

Also, I had a fellowship program, which I started, and this fellowship program was approved by the two vascular societies: the Society for Vascular Surgery, which is probably the most academic society in the vascular field; and also by the International Cardiovascular Society, the North American chapter. My fellowship was approved for one year training, and it started in 1971, and I trained a vascular surgeon every year for twenty years. Some of them have become professors; many of them, of course, are in their individual practices. It's been very rewarding. I enjoyed my career.

HIRUKI: Did you continue your interaction with OHSU during your practice?

INAHARA: Oh, yes. Initially, I was making rounds with the residents, and I operated up there with the residents. I made rounds at the Veterans Hospital. But as I became more and more busy, I did less and less work up there; but, nevertheless, I retained my academic connection with them and became a clinical professor of surgery in 1983.

I still attend the vascular rounds on Saturdays, although during the summer I don't, usually. I still attend the M & M and surgical rounds at St. Vincent's, even after I retired. I think it's difficult to completely cut off contact with the academic side of surgery. It still holds some interest.

HIRUKI: What do you see as exciting things to develop from here on in vascular surgery?

INAHARA: Well, I'm seeing endovascular surgery being performed, and I have some misgivings about that, about the concept. Where it's going to go in ten years from now remains to be seen, but I'm not fully convinced that this is the proper way to go. Certain features, I think, may be an advantage. One is that it's less invasive to the patient; perhaps the cost is less. I think the complications may be the same, but my feeling is that maybe when the complications occur I think they're more severe. But the long-term outcome is where I am concerned. I think it just remains to be seen.

My feeling about arterial repair is that the best repair, of course, is the autogenous repair, insertion of prosthesis. Of course, aneurysms have to be replaced somehow, whether it's by endovascular techniques or whether by actual replacement of the arteries. But as far as restoring circulation for the occlusive diseases, under certain conditions I think endarterectomy procedure is superior. Autogenous vein bypass, of course, is superior, but, of course, this can't always be done, so you have to have substitutes. I'll be very interested to see what the outcome is going to be ten years from now, what the long-term results are.

HIRUKI: I guess, looking back on your career of surgery and teaching, is there anything in your upbringing that you think helped you?

INAHARA: Well, I think hard work is really important. You have to devote your life to it. In time and effort you have to be there. You have to keep up the academic side; you have to publish to be ahead; keep up with the new developments; you have to attend meetings. Those are very important. But you also have to operate. You can't be an armchair surgeon; you've got to operate to keep up with the new things.

HIRUKI: And was there anything about having practiced locally that benefited your career?

INAHARA: Well, I think it was easier for me to start in my practice here in Portland because I had trained here and I knew so many people, so many of the doctors and so many of my classmates, and so on. So that was a big help in getting started.

HIRUKI: Looking back at the school time again, you started to talk about the personalities in the class and the fact that there were more women than had ever been in a class before. Would that be a true statement?

INAHARA: Yes, I think so, but that was just an observation. I don't think it really amounted to anything. I know that all the women graduated and they all became practitioners and they were all successful. We see them at class reunions and see how they've turned out.

HIRUKI: And what was the best thing about being an OHSU medical student?

INAHARA: Well, it was—this is my home, and going to school here, practicing here, living here was a great experience for me. I wouldn't live anywhere else. The Northwest is probably the nicest part of the United States, and I think Oregon is probably the best place in the Northwest.

HIRUKI: I guess you can speak from experience. What did you think of Boston?

INAHARA: Boston was a very busy place. It's an academic center. I was awed when I first went there because I knew the giants in surgery were all there at the Mass General. Whenever I had free time I would go into all the operating rooms and watch the big-name surgeons operate. I even went to the Boston Children's Hospital and watched Robert Gross operate, the pediatric surgeon. He was *the* leading pediatric surgeon at the time. I also went to Boston City Hospital to attend their meetings, grand rounds. I also attended all the clinicalpathologic conferences at Mass General, the CPCs—they're famous.

We got to know Boston. We went to their museums, we went to their markets, we went to their shopping centers and the coastline; we went to see the Plymouth Rock. We went up into Vermont and New Hampshire to see the fall foliage; we went into Vermont to watch them harvest the maple sap to make maple syrup. That was very interesting. We went to Barre, Vermont, to see the granite quarry where they made tombstones. So we had a great experience in New England for the year that we were there. It was fun. By then, I had three children—of course, they were too young to remember the New England states.

But as I came back to the West—the New England scenery, geography, is much different than the Northwest. They do have mountains, but they're low mountains, and they mainly have deciduous trees. So when I came back and saw the Grand Tetons, I was never so glad to get back to the West. The Grand Tetons were beautiful. As you come back into the West through the Rockies...

HIRUKI: You were driving?

INAHARA: Yes, we drove. We had three children, and the five of us drove back.

HIRUKI: That must have been a station wagon, I guess.

INAHARA: No, it was a car, a four-door sedan. What we did was, we bought a foam rubber pad that we put in the back so that the whole back was one big bed for the kids, and they slept there and played in the back of the car.

HIRUKI: We ought to talk about your kids a little bit. What sort of home did you want to have for them?

INAHARA: Oh, of course, when we came back to Portland—I had built a small home before I left here, and during my absence I had it rented out to another doctor who was an intern. We came back and, of course, our children started grade school here, and we were living on the east side. They went to a school a school called Creston. After that, we moved to the west side and they went to Wilson High School. They graduated from there and they all went off to college.

My oldest daughter, she went to Pitzer College in Claremont, California, a private college. My son, who was number two, he went to Claremont Men's College in California; and my third, a daughter, went to the University of Oregon; and my fourth also went to the University of Oregon, and she also went to the University of Oregon Nursing School and she is an RN.

My oldest daughter was in advertising, and she is still in the advertising field. She's an independent contractor. My son is an anesthesiologist. He lives in Spokane and he works at the Deaconess Hospital.

My third, the daughter, she became a pastry chef. She went to France and trained at a pastry school just outside of Paris, called—let's see; I can't remember offhand. But she graduated from there and worked in Paris for a year or a year and a half, returned to this country; and she went to Los Angeles and became a pastry chef at one of the French restaurants and became quite famous down there. She had many write-ups. But she gave it up because the work is so hard, long hours, and she decided that was just too hard for her. So she went back to UCLA and got a teaching degree. In the meanwhile, because of her French connections, she married a fellow from France, so they are living in France; and she's teaching English at a grade school there, and he is also a schoolteacher. But they are now coming back to Oregon, next month as a matter of fact.

And my youngest daughter is a nurse, and she is still working as a nurse at the Sun Valley Hospital in Idaho, because that's where she lives now. And we have six grandchildren, ranging in age from three months to eleven years [laughs].

My parents are both deceased now. My father passed away in 1981. He was ninetyfive years of age. My mother passed away in 1996. She was ninety-eight. So they had a long life, and they were well until they passed away. Very fortunate. I still have many cousins in Japan, and we go back and forth. They've come to visit us and we've been to Japan; I think I've been there four or five times now, and we plan to go again in October.

HIRUKI: How old were you the first time?

INAHARA: The first time, I was only three.

HIRUKI: Oh, right. You were mentioning this.

INAHARA: Then I went to Japan in 1939, just before the war started, and then I think three times in the seventies and eighties and nineties.

HIRUKI: What observations would you have from the different times you went to Japan?

INAHARA: Oh, Japan has certainly changed from a very rural country to very modern.

HIRUKI: For instance, that visit just before the war, what are your recollections of that?

INAHARA: Before the war was—we were there the whole summer, and I recall we were in Gifu at the time.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2/Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

HIRUKI: Interview with Dr. Toshio Inahara for the OHSU Oral History Project, tape two, side one.

And so you were just recalling your visit to prewar Japan.

INAHARA: Yes. Back in 1939. We were in Gifu, mainly, but I met my cousins—my mother's cousins, I should say, two brothers, and they were two tailors, and they became pretty famous as they developed the department store Takashimaya. I remember they came over to see us at my grandparents' place, and his wife came over with a chauffeur in a black Mercedes to pick us up. They were going to come to visit us in Portland on his buying trips, but he never did come to Portland.

I think the legacy my uncle left is really quite remarkable. This Buddhist temple is a very big one, and the full-time [*bonsan*?] there. When we go to Japan, we always go there and we have a service.

HIRUKI: And you'd classify yourself as Buddhist?

INAHARA: I am not a Buddhist. I am not a Methodist and I'm not a Christian, either. I choose to be independent. But, of course, my parents were Buddhist. I go to Buddhist services, I go to Christian churches, so I'm open minded.

HIRUKI: You described your growing up outside of the city. What were your ties with the community, growing up?

INAHARA: Well, you see, the community was strictly a farming area. We lived in a beautiful valley, a place called Hillside, and attended the grade school there, which was, as I said, a one-room grade school with all eight grades. Right next to the school, on a two-acre plot right next to it, was the church; so many of the school functions were held in the church, and, so, we went to church there.

But, of course, the community was very small. We got to know everybody in that valley. I remember, though, when we first moved there that there were some prejudices. My father used to have a lot of workers that stayed on our farm. He built a house for the workers, and we had a number of Filipino workers who worked for us. Unfortunately, the Filipinos, they were younger men. They got into trouble with the community. I think it had something to do with girls in that area. I can remember one time a mob of people came to our house and demanded that we get rid of them. It was kind of scary, because this was at night and, I don't know how many people were there, but they were outside our house, yelling and, you know, demanding, and so on. But that was just one incident.

A lot of racial incidents have happened to us, many, many times. But times have gotten better.

HIRUKI: Can you maybe mention a few more examples that come to mind?

INAHARA: Well, I've been refused service in a restaurant.

HIRUKI: When was that?

INAHARA: During the war. I remember when I first went back to the Midwest—I can't recall; I think it was in Chicago. It could have been the time when I was a student. I went into a restaurant for a meal, and I sat at a counter, as I remember, and I had my meal, whatever it was, but I remember that I had a glass of milk, and this fellow had put a cigarette butt in the milk, which I didn't know. It was in the bottom of the milk. That really made me sick. But minor things, you know. They call names.

See, when we lived in Tacoma when I was a boy, we went to grade school there, and we got out at 3:30. At 4:30 we went to Japanese school, from 4:30 to 6:30 every day. We had a very big Japanese school there and a very good teacher, a very good principal. All my friends were Japanese. As a matter of fact, my parents spoke little or no English, so when I started grade school, I couldn't speak any English. It was all Japanese. So the first few years in grade school it was difficult. But that's the way it was in those days. But it was fun. I had friends of my age, you know, that I went to grade school with and went to Japanese school with.

HIRUKI: And celebrated the holidays?

INAHARA: Oh, yes. Traditional Japanese holidays.

HIRUKI: Such as?

INAHARA: New Year's Day we would go to the school, sing "*Kimigayo*" and "*Tennoheika Banzai*" and the whole thing. We used to do that. It's just amazing how the times have changed now. We used to have Japanese school picnics, which was a lot of fun.

HIRUKI: And you mentioned the Gifu-ken people—was there a *kenjinkai* [Japanese prefectural association]?

INAHARA: No, we didn't have a *kenjinkai* because there were very, very few people from Gifu-ken. There were only two families that we knew of. So we just went to what they call the Japanese Association picnic, *Nikkei Jinkai* picnics, and the school picnics.

HIRUKI: So your house, growing up, was Japanese-speaking, then?

INAHARA: Yes. We all spoke Japanese at home.

HIRUKI: How about when the brothers and sisters talked to each other, then? Or, I guess it was just brothers.

INAHARA: No, we spoke English among ourselves. Only to our parents, and to other *isseis* we would speak Japanese.

HIRUKI: And, then, raising your own children?

INAHARA: Unfortunately, it's all English. My children have taken Japanese in school, like in college; they've gone to Japanese school locally, small classes. But, of course, since they didn't speak it at home, it was hard for them to remember. I can still speak some Japanese because that's the way I grew up. But, of course, my Japanese is not the same as yours, you know, the people who have grown up in Japan. But I think basic Japanese is the same. I think we were very fortunate that we were bilingual, but, unfortunately, we just can't carry this on.

This is what I admire about the Chinese. The Chinese younger generations all speak Chinese. They all are together as a community, whereas the Japanese tend to scatter. You know, they become Americanized. I don't know why that difference is. The Chinese, I think, are a very well-knit group. They learn their customs, they learn their language, and they're more together.

HIRUKI: I guess you didn't experience internment yourself, but have you interacted with anybody who did go through internment? The internment period?

INAHARA: No. We were not in camp, but we did visit Minidoka many times. Our friends were all there, so we used to go there.

HIRUKI: What were your impressions of it?

INAHARA: Well, it was pretty demeaning. My wife was in camp, of course, and they were in big, long buildings, with sheets and blankets separating the families. No privacy. And the food was terrible. She said that all she ate was mainly peanut butter and jam sandwiches, the food was so bad. Things that they couldn't eat, you know. She remembers them serving pig tail. Imagine serving pig tail with hair on it. That's what they'd bring in to feed you. It was pretty bad.

I remember when we moved out. We moved on May 2, 1942, and the Japanese people in Portland went into assembly camp May 3rd, 4th, and 5th, so we just got out just in time. They were all herded down into the livestock center here, just after the animals had moved out. Flies, smell. Imagine that, in May and June, July, the hot part of the summer. I think that my family and my personal life has been—we've been very fortunate that things that have happened to us have been—we're the lucky ones.

HIRUKI: Why don't you think more people did what your family did, simply move outside the area?

INAHARA: Well, I think it's a matter of doing something on your own. You have to take the initiative to do something. See, I was only, what, at that time, in '41, I was just twenty. But I took it on myself to do this. My father couldn't do it. He couldn't speak the language. So I did all this, looked after the family. So I knew this was available, and so I worked for it, and I was finally able to do it. You know, the *issei* people, they had a very hard time in this country. They couldn't speak the language, and they didn't know what to do, in many instances. So being the oldest son, I had to do many things to help my father. I know that when I was ten, eleven years old, I was going with my father to conduct his business. I had to go to the bank with him; as I say, we were indebted all during the Depression years, and I had to go to the bank with my father to arrange for loans at the age of eleven, you know. You grow up fast when you do things like that. I started driving a car when I was ten. I lied about my age, and I had a license when I was thirteen. When I was thirteen I used to drive our truck, loaded with berries, into Portland. So, you know, when you have to do things, you learn to do them, and you learn responsibility, and so you grow up fast. I think that was a good thing for me, you know, to have that chance to do things like that.

Now, when we moved back to Ontario, I was the first one to get a permit to buy a tractor, because, you know, they were rationed. Then, also, I went looking, and I was able to find a used tractor, a Caterpillar. The first one was a John Deere wheel tractor, and I was able to look around and buy a car. As a matter of fact, I went down to Salt Lake City, took the bus down there, and I found a car down there and bought it. Of course, I was what? It was '42 then, so I was twenty-one, so I was old enough to know better [laughs]. But at any rate, I sort of looked after the family. But after I left, of course, my brothers all did the same.

HIRUKI: Going back to the medical school years, were there many other Asian-American students in your class? INAHARA: No, I was the only one. I think they took maybe one a year or maybe two a year.

HIRUKI: Was there a quota of some sort, or was that just the way the percentages would be?

INAHARA: Yes, I think so.

HIRUKI: You weren't aware of any sort of admissions policy?

INAHARA: Well, I think there were two in Dr. Oyama's class. Do you know Albert Oyama? He's your pathologist there. George Hara was, I think, in that class, and Art Matsuda. I think there were three in that one class. I know when I first started medical school, here there was an older fellow who had just—I think he was either a senior or he was an intern or resident. His name was John Uchiyama. I think the very next year he went back to Des Moines, Iowa, I think, so I never did see him. But I remember John's family, because they were strawberry farmers too, out in a place called Cornelius, which is fairly close to where we were, maybe fifteen miles.

Let's see, who else? I didn't know Dr. Nakadate here. I think he was way before me. There was also Dr. Kuge, Toshiaki Kuge. He was a family practitioner here. But he was also before me. I don't know what years he went to school, though.

HIRUKI: Did you have a sense of being a pioneer in that regard a little bit?

INAHARA: Oh, I think so. Of course, I was the first one to come back after the war, first student after the war.

HIRUKI: How did you find the climate at that time?

INAHARA: Well, you know, I really wasn't too affected because I was confined to the Hill, mainly, and I never did get out very much. It was a rare occasion I went to see a movie [laughs]. As a matter of fact, whenever I needed a pair of shoes, I used to go down to the Red Cross and donate a pint of blood. They gave me twenty-five dollars for that, and I'd buy my shoes whenever I needed them.

HIRUKI: So the medical community, then, was fairly open minded?

INAHARA: Yes, pretty small. I pretty much stayed on the Hill.

HIRUKI: I was going to ask about a extracurricular activities during medical school, but...

INAHARA: Well, one of my classmates introduced me to golf, so I started to play a

little, but, of course, I couldn't afford much. I couldn't afford the price of paying green fees [laughs]. But anyway, I did get a start in golf at that time. But that was only the first time. Then, of course, during the internship and residency years, you know, you just didn't have time to play golf. And, of course, when we were back east we didn't, so I really didn't get into it until, oh, I would say the late fifties or early sixties.

We used to take our children fishing, trout fishing. We'd go up into the lakes up here in central Oregon, the streams and so on. And my father used to like to fish, so I'd take him with us too.

HIRUKI: With your experience of practically running the farm yourself, did you find yourself fitting naturally into sort of the senior medical student role or senior resident role or that sort of supervisory position?

INAHARA: Well, of course, there isn't much connection between going to school and farming, but I think I had greater experience than my fellow students because I'd been through so much. I certainly had more knowledge of business, compared to them. And that's helped me, too.

And also, you know, I manage my own investments. I, of course, have to do a great deal of reading to keep that up, but it's a carryover of my academic work. You know, you had to do a lot of reading when you're a surgeon or you're in practice. And, of course, I did a lot of writing too, but this habit of reading has carried over, and I do a great deal of reading on investments now. As a matter of fact, I do it every day. You have to, you know, to manage investments. I take care of my own IRA.

I also managed my children's accounts too, and I'm teaching them investments. They are learning. They're learning very well. I'm really happy with that. My son manages his own investments. Two of my girls, we sort of invest together. We consult and talk about investments.

HIRUKI: Growing up did you ever come into town, then, to see what the Japantown was like in Portland before the war?

INAHARA: Well, yes. The only time I went to Japantown was when my father brought us in. And I can remember the first time in my life I ever went to a restaurant. [Unclear] Restaurant was a Japanese restaurant downtown. It was sort of a fast-food place run by Japanese, but they served sort of semi-Japanese, semi-American food. But I can remember the very first time I went to a restaurant to eat. That was quite a treat [laughs].

HIRUKI: Do you remember what you had?

INAHARA: Well, I can't remember now, but I still remember the restaurant.

HIRUKI: Maybe you could describe it.

INAHARA: Well, it was just a counter, lunch counter. This was right down there, I believe, on Third Avenue. It was run by an *issei* fellow. But whenever I'd bring berries into town, you know, we'd drive in; we'd bring in a big load, in a big ton-and-a-half truck, and I'd have to bring two of my workers to help me load up and to unload.

After I would deliver the berries, on the way home, we would stop in Beaverton. At that time Beaverton was just one main street, and it went around like this. One was the TV Highway—Tualatin Valley Highway went around, and Beaverton went this way, downtown, and they met here, and then went out to Hillsboro on that TV Highway. Well, these two roads met at the point, here, toward Portland. Right now, that point is still there, where the two highways met.

But I remember right at that point there was a restaurant, and all it was, was a railroad car, a railroad passenger car, that was converted to a restaurant, and we would stop there, on the way back, to have hamburger. That was our evening meal. And the hamburgers were ten cents at that time. Of course, we never had things like that at home to eat, you know, so it was quite a treat. I can still remember the bun, hamburger bun, you know, and the meat, and it had lettuce and tomato on it. So we all stopped there and had a hamburger every time we'd come into town [laughs]. That was fun. We'd deliver the berries after the berry pickers all finished, you know, so it's late. It would be after dark, you know, going back.

HIRUKI: I see. They would start at what time, picking?

INAHARA: They would quit picking around five o'clock.

HIRUKI: After having started at?

INAHARA: In the morning.

HIRUKI: Oh, in the morning?

INAHARA: Oh, yes. They'd start at seven in the morning, at daybreak, and finish at five, and we'd load up the truck and come in and unload, so it would be close to being dark by the time we finished. And then go back, unload the empty crates, the new crates, and then be ready to go in the morning.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1/Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

HIRUKI: At the end of side one you were talking about how your family grew strawberries. Japanese Americans in California also grew strawberries, but was there any reason for picking strawberries as the crop?

INAHARA: What do you mean?

HIRUKI: Well, I guess there were a number of choices of crops to grow. Why strawberries?

INAHARA: Oh, here?

HIRUKI: Yeah.

INAHARA: I don't know. The area was famous for strawberries. There were a lot of strawberry farmers. All the Japanese were strawberry farmers. And the berries, they grew well here, while out in Gresham, you know, they raise other kinds of berries. But out our way, the Hillsboro way, Hillsboro and Banks—Banks was the main town for Japanese strawberry farmers. They had canning facilities for it. See, in those olden days what they used to do was, they used to put the berries in a wooden barrel with sugar, and they would put them into cold storage, and then this would then be processed later. Then, about 1935 they brought in the freezing process, and we took all our berries to the Birdseye Frozen Foods. That was in Hillsboro. So preservation by keeping it in sugar, then they went to freezing, then later on they made preserves, strawberry preserves or jams from it. So it evolved, you know, the processing evolved too.

HIRUKI: So that changed where you brought your crop—not so many that you would bring into town?

INAHARA: Then, of course, what we brought to Portland was the fresh market. We brought in, you know, to sell the berries fresh. We used to lose money doing that. We would pick the berries, pay the berry pickers, bring the berries into town, and we'd sell them for twenty-five cents for twenty-four boxes. Twenty-five cents. Imagine that. The hourly wage was ten cents to twelve-and-a-half cents an hour at that time.

HIRUKI: But a hamburger was ten cents.

INAHARA: Ten cents.

HIRUKI: Do you remember any other parts about the old Japantown?

INAHARA: No. No, we didn't go to Japantown much. We were poor farm kids that never came into town, except when necessary.

HIRUKI: So I guess you wouldn't have had any *Nikkei-jin* [Japanese Americans] out where you were living.

INAHARA: Well, yes, we did. We'd go to a town called Banks. That's where the main Japanese community was, Banks. We'd go to Japanese school every Sunday. I don't know what time we started. Probably at nine, I imagine, because our teachers came from Portland; they had to drive out from Portland, so probably nine o'clock. All day, Japanese school all day. It was a pretty large group of kids. We had two rooms, the older and the

younger.

We didn't live in Banks; we lived in this place called Hillside, which was out about, I would say, six, maybe eight miles from Banks. And I would drive my dad's car and take my brothers and go to Japanese school, and my parents would stay home. They would be working. They worked every day of the week. So we'd go to Banks, and I would do the grocery shopping at the same time, and then come home at the end of the day.

I can remember the grocery store. I think the name was Kessler's. The eggs were ten cents a dozen. They had two loaves of bread for twenty-five cents. Gasoline was ten or fifteen cents a gallon, as I recall.

During the busy time of harvest our staple diet was bologna or wieners with rice [laughs]. Mother didn't have time to cook, we were so busy.

HIRUKI: How about in less busy times?

INAHARA: Oh, then, of course, she would make [*nihoshaku*?], of course. We had our own garden. So we'd grow mostly Japanese things, you know, cucumbers and *nasu* [eggplant] and squash, [*kawaja*?], daikon [white radish], napa [Chinese cabbage], things like that.

HIRUKI: I was going to say that you wouldn't find that at Kessler's, I don't think.

INAHARA: Well, yes, you would.

HIRUKI: Because it was in Banks and there was a market for it?

INAHARA: Yes.

We used to have a lot of fun playing, when we were kids. We didn't have much, but we played among ourselves, and we had lots of fun. We enjoyed our childhood.

I started writing my autobiography, but I've been so busy with other things that I haven't gotten very far with it.

HIRUKI: What sort of things are you up to these days?

INAHARA: Well, these days, my main interest is investments. I've done very well in it. And I do a lot of charity work, charitable contributions. The Japanese-American National Museum, I'm a founder; the Japanese-American Memorial in Washington, D.C., I'm a contributor there; the World War II Veterans Memorial, I made contributions; the Korean War Veterans contributions. Let's see, what else. The Japanese-American National Library. I think those are very worthy projects to support. The Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center here I've been supporting. HIRUKI: Have you sat on any committees for those?

INAHARA: No. They asked me to be on the board of trustees at the National Museum, but I felt I was too busy, and also it was quite a distance from here, so I declined the appointment for that.

I've been very active in the surgical societies. I've made a lot of presentations; I've written a lot of papers; and I've been president of a number of societies. As a matter of fact, I started the Pacific Northwest Vascular Society, which covers Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Idaho. At that time there wasn't a society here, and they were being organized regionally throughout the United States. I was a member of the national societies, and so John Porter and I talked about it and he sort of left it to me, so I got the society started here in the Northwest.

HIRUKI: That was what year?

INAHARA: That was back in the early eighties, I think.

HIRUKI: How do you feel about the situation of Japanese-Americans in America today, and your personal place?

INAHARA: Well, I think they're being very successful. I only have some misgivings that they seem to be losing their ties to Japan, the cultural ties. I'd like to see them preserve that culture, the Japanese. But, of course, that's pretty difficult because they can't speak the language, and I think that makes a difference. I think because they can't speak the language I think there's less interest in Japanese things. And as I look at Asians overall, I think the Japanese as a group seem to lose their ties faster than, say, the Koreans or the Chinese or the Vietnamese. Whether that's good or bad, it's hard to know.

HIRUKI: What about your life are you most satisfied with?

INAHARA: Oh, I think that I'm very happy that I was in the field of vascular surgery. As I say, I would do it all over again. It's such a fascinating field of surgery. It's more precise, and the decisions are made on the operating table. It's not the post-op care that does it. As a matter of fact, in most operations the outcome is decided on the operating table, and especially so in vascular. And the fact that in the vascular field you don't have to deal much with malignancy, which is nice.

HIRUKI: Do you have any advice for today's and future generations of Japanese-Americans?

INAHARA: Well, you know the old saying, the world is getting smaller, and I think people from all different national origins are going to get into a worldwide association of whatever they do, business, education, travel, you know. It seems like everything is

worldwide now.

But, in a way, I'd like to see them have some self-identity. This is sort of philosophizing, but it's going to be difficult because of interracial marriages, and so it's easy to lose the national origin identity. Whether that's important or not, I suppose it's individual. I think an individual has to think for himself: "The Japanese culture, does that interest me, is that important to me?" There are many good things about Japanese culture that I'd like to see preserved, but it's difficult.

HIRUKI: What aspects do you think helped you in your career? What aspects of the culture?

INAHARA: Well, some of the nice features about Japanese is that, generally speaking, they're well mannered. And I think that is sort of beginning to wane. I think the younger Japanese have lost that, from what I see of students here from Japan.

I think the Japanese art is different. It's beautiful. I love the block print techniques. It's becoming a lost art. Well, I suppose just like the European art is becoming a lost art too. You don't see any more Rembrandts. So as the world changes I guess these things become extinct too. Maybe that's living in the past [laughs].

We love Japanese cuisine. It's not only good, but it's healthful, so we hate to see our children get away from that.

HIRUKI: They don't like certain things?

INAHARA: It's not that so much, it's that they don't know how to make it, how to cook it. When they come to our home, they love it. My wife cooks Japanese traditionally.

HIRUKI: She learned from her parents, I guess, or her mother?

INAHARA: Right.

HIRUKI: Well, is there anything I haven't covered that you would like to talk about?

INAHARA: Oh, I think it's pretty much covered. There are many details and little things that come up, but it would be pretty difficult to cover everything.

HIRUKI: Okay. And is there anything that we have talked about that you'd like to add details or talk about some more?

INAHARA: Oh, I don't think so. I think we've covered the most important things.

HIRUKI: Well, then I'll thank you for spending the time with me today, repeating some very interesting stories. Thank you.

INAHARA: Oh, not at all. No, I consider myself very fortunate. I have my father to thank for it.

[End of interview]

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