Suzuki, Tatsuro "Buck" 103=1

MR. TATSURO BUCK SUZUKI

October 13, 1972.

Interviewed by: Maya Koizumi

Japanese Born Families on Dorn Island; Working for A Salted-Salmon Plant; Brought Up In Delta Norweigan Community; Political Education Organizing Japanese-Canadian Association With Young Japanese In 1930; Veteran of World War II.

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Mr. Suzuki's Father Came From Japan in 1905 With 86 Men Hired By the Japanese Boss Who Had Cannery On Dorn Island; 47 Families Lived Very Close To Each Other; Japanese Rituals And Festivals; Member Of Japanese Fishermen's Union; Organized J.C.A. With His 2nd Generation Colleagues.

R.R.A.S. Oral History Programmem Vancouver
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Interview # 103, Tape No. 1, Tracks 1 & 2, Speed No. 3 3/4.

Vancouver R.R.A.S. 1972

(form 105)

Interview #103, Tape # 1, Track # 1

Miss KoizumI: Would you tell me your name please?

Mr. Suzuki: My name is Suzuki, I'm known Buck Suzuki, my Japanese name, the given name, Tatsuro.

Miss Koizumi: Were you born in Canada?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, I was born very close to where I am now at the present time, right here in Canada.

Miss Koizumi: This is Delta, is it?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, this is Delta, I was born in Richmond.

Miss Koisumi: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, our very large family, five brothers and four sisters.

Miss Koisumi: Are you the eldest one?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes..except for one in Japan, I...I should have said ten in the family. I have, or did have, an older sister in Japan.

Miss Koizumi: When were you born?

Mr. Suzuki: I was born in 1916.

Miss Koizumi: Do you remember about your childhood, like before you went to school.

Mr. Suzuki: Not very much except that there seemed to be a very happy community that we lived in. We are from the..I think the area the Japanese call the Tohoko Area and different from most of the people in Steveston. We had a very distinct accent, everybody was from more or less the same areas, same language, with the same accent and I though that was a very normal way of living, very happy, we seemed to have parties and celebrations for just about every occasion. We knew that in order to make a living that everybody was in one way or other connected with the fishing industry.

Miss Koizumi: So all the Neighbourhood people worked in fishing?

Mr. Suzuki: We...I lived on an island, I was born on an island, completely Japanese, all the residents were Japanese on that island. It was known as Gawn Island and it's just immediately across the river from where I am now and at one time it was the property of British Columbia Packers and..when the salmon canning season was over they would begin salting salmon for export to Japan and I can still faintly remember people telling us that the sailing vessels from Japan used to come right up to that island and loads of salted, what they call chum salmon to Japan.

Miss Koizumi: Was that..was it done in the cannery?

Mr. Suzuki: No, this was done separately by the Japanese community living on that island. There wasn't a very big community, I think there were about 47 families or individuals and families.

Miss Koizumi: That was around the time that you were born in the 1920's?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, I was born of the first..male child born on that island.. there had been others born there but they were all female and apparently I was quite a curiosity, some of them made darn sure that I was a male and not a female (interviewer Laughs).

Miss Koizumi: When did your father move to that island?

Mr. Suzuki: My father came from Nargaiken illegally with 87 others on the sailing vessel. Their intention was to head for America. Well, they used to call, you know, there was no differention between Canada and the United States and anything across the ocean was America to them. They were coming over here and there was a man already here who had established this community of Japanese on Gawn Island and he wanted to enlarge that, but he did it in a rather unorthodox way, he..got a sailing vessel, loaded it up with fishing gear and the guys going out fishing and he took a whole bunch of people from the Tohoko Area and crossed the Pacific, 1916.

Miss Koizumi: Then these 86 people all came together?

Mr. Suzuki: They all came together, took them almost three months to.. cross the Pacific, they had dr..finished all their water, they had just about half a cup of rice when they finally reached the Canadian shore, and they..I think they spent about three days at the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Euca which is the entrance channel for the United States and Canada. They were caught in a storm and they packed for three days, finally they made it to the present site of William Head in..near Victoria and first thing they did they put up the old flag for water, but they were immediately put under arrest because they had come, you know, across illegally.

Miss Koizumi: What did the customs do with these people?

Mr. Suzuki: Well, at that time there was..this was immediately after the San Francisco earthquake apparently and there was a shortage of labour. Some of the people went on land, you know, from the ship and they were immediately picked up by the police at that time. Others remained on board the ship but after weeks of haggeling back and forth they were given the choice of being deported or else if they wanted remain here and keep on working. Well that was the original intent so that's how my father came across.

Miss Koizumi: I see, so this man knew that that was going to happen.

Mr. Suzuki: This man, he had already you know, established a place here but insufficient labour, he was one of the first that started the export of salt chum salmon to Japan and he wanted more labour, more fisher-men; it was to his benefit too.

Miss Koizumi: How old was your father?

Mr. Suzuki: Mmm-Hmm, at the time he was around 26 Or 27.

Miss Koizumi: Did he have a family with him?

Mr. Suzuki: He had mother over in Japan, they were just married, three brothers came over at one time and the reason why they came 'cause we

weren't most affluent family, apparently at one time we were but for the sake of honour we got into a legal hassel which lasted two years, well, they won the case but afterwards they checked their financial status they found out that they had nothing left so they were in dire poverty in their younger days, soon as they grew up they decided that the first chance they got they would come to America.

Miss Koizumi: Was he a fisherman?

Mr. Suzuki: No, he..he was a jack-of-all-trades, you know, a little bit of everything and not much of anything, you know, but...

Miss Koizumi: Was it a farming village where he lived?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, it was just in from the sea, but it was a farming village, but I think from what he said before they became poor, you know, it seems to me that on my father's side they weren't aggressive people they never carried swords, they weren't of the Samurai Clan but they were village elders, you know, village councillors, people like that.

Miss Koizumi: Eighty-six is quite a lot of people, how about other people, I mean like your father with positions at that time?

Mr. Suzuki: You mean at that time?

Miss Koizumi: These 86 people on that boat.

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, Most of them were like Dad, they were people seeking fortune in a foreign country, some had skills as carpenters, some were farmers, I don't think any were fishermen.

Miss Koizumi: That's very interesting.

Mr. Susuki: Yes, it is very interesting and they brought their own weight with them but they had relatives in some cases that were fishermen up around , some of the places I think if I remember correctly, is there such a place called Ish nu makee up around there and at parties I can remember, oh, they used to sing these sea-shanties, you know clapping their hands and..that was my memory of my childhood...I always

thought, people/ are strange that is, white Canadians were rather strange, they didn't speak Jananese, they were taller, they seemed to be more crude, that was my first impression, they were human beings in the sense I recognized that part of it but there was a difference.

Miss Koizumi: So where you lived on the island you didn't see any white people?

Mr. Suzuki: Very few except, you know, the people that we saw were people who used to be employed by the Fish Canneries and they used to help in the delivery of fish etc. and at times, well, the different authorities would come around to make their routine investigations and I knew that they were not Japanese, their features were different but I never thought it strange in any way, they..I thought that, well, they were things that just existed, you know.

Miss Koizumi: Well, when you were a child, so there was this man that came out to make his fortune

Mr. Suzuki: Uh-huh.

Miss Koizumi: Well, are their any other canneries?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, there were many canneries in those days all up and down the Fraser River, especially at Steveston and...most of the canneries had Japanese fishermen, not all Japanese fishermen but many Japanese fishermen, many of the fishermen were Japanese.

Miss Koizumi: How far is the island from Steveston, like did you go to Steveston to do shopping?

Mr. Suzuki: No, we used to do our shopping in New Westminster and they used to either go across and walk to New Westminster or we would go by boat to New Westminster.

Miss Koizumi: How long did it take by boat?

Mr. Suzuki:: Oh, not very long, although the boats in those days were.. were very old things compared with what we have now and they would take

almost, oh, an hour to get up.

Miss Koizumi: What kind of boat was it?

Mr. Suzuki: They were boats built especially to pull net by hand and they weren't very big by modern standards. By the time I got on the boats, they were about from 25 to 25½ feet long, very narrow so that, you know, it would be easy to pull the net up, the least resistance. They were different than the Steveston model boats because the water and weather in the river which is roughly seventeen miles up from the mouth of the Fraser River, would be much milder and calmer than Steveston and as a result the design of the boat was different even though the size might be the same, the design...I think we had what we called a square stern, and to use a very crude word, kiss a kitty or, you know, stern cut and they used to use those boats with very small motors on them. Some of them were about two horse power, three and a half horse power, two and a half horse power, five horse power motors on those boats were very, very.....were considered to be very large, which was a far cry from what they are today.

I don't remember sail boars, but before that Dad used to tell us that all the boats were sail boats.

Miss Koizumi: What kind of facilities.....

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MR. TATSURO BUCK SUZUKI

November 9, 1972.

Interviewed by: Maya Koizumi
John Hodgins

A Japanese-Canadian Warrant Officer In The British Navy Intelligence Service In The East Asian Jungle.

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The Japanese-Canadian Citizen's Association sent the spokesman to Ottawa to Appeal for enfranchisement for the Japanese Citizens. Mr. Suzuki was one of the members of the Advisory Committee at the time of the war. He volunteered for the British Navy in 1944.

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Interview #103, Tape 2, Tracks Number 1 & 2, Speed No.33/4

Vancouver R.R.A.S. 1972
(form 105)

Mr. Tatsuro Buck Suzuki
November 9, 1972.

Interview No. 103, Tape No. 2 of 3, Track 1

Mr. Suzuki: I think the last time when we concluded our, or at least terminated our discussion, I happened to mention that I was one of the originators of the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association, and we at that time felt that it was necessary in order to ... organize the Japanese Canadians who were very, very timid, you know, rather ... or almost completely out of touch with Canadian society to get closer to the general Canadian society, in order to go and understand each other better... that we were not quite ogres who had horns on our heads... that we were just ordinary human beings with our frailties and produce if we had any, and we knew that no individual could do it ... that our parents were .... had almost given up the idea, coming a Canadian... that they ... at that time they were denied the basic rights of a human being in a democratic society that was franchised .. the right to vote, the right to choose the person to speak on your behalf, politically, and thereby affecting your whole social and economic setup. And, one of our primary goals was to ... seek the right of franchise - the right to vote on an equal basis with other Canadians. When I say "other Canadians", non-Asiatic other Canadians, you know, and we realized unless we attained that right that the assistance of the politicians would not be forthcoming. As a matter of fact, that we would be used as a"tool" at the time of any pending or at election times that our ... that the Asiatic being was something to be .... that was not good for Canada, that we had no use for them, that they shouldn't be here, that ... well, to use the terms that were quite frequently heard at that time, and it was said that "the only good Jap was a dead Jap". While they didn't say that about the East Indians so much, or the Chinese, so far

as the Japanese Canadians were concerned, it was a very popular phrase, very popular in a term that was being used commonly, and we thought that we must do something about this, that we are of this age now where some of us are getting married, that we have the question of our children and we have a question of our future. We had this whole subject of making our fathers understand and it was not a test of purely economic question whereby you could give up your social life in Canada, and once you obtain your economic goal, of whatever you set it for, to retreat to Japan, you know. We thought that would never do. We had to explain to our parents that that attitude in itself was wrong.

Ms. Koizumi: Well, how did they react?

Mr. Suzuki: They reacted as if to say in a typical oriental manner that,"Look, you people were ... not .. listening to your elders, that the elders know better, that we have longer experience .. that we have experienced a series of discriminatory attitudes over the years and that we know what we are talking about, that it is impossible to go and break through this barrier and you children are barking up the wrong tree. Now, with you, young punks, you don't understand the situation. That a Japanese is a Japanese, an oriental is an oriental. They'll ... you'll never be accepted in .. not in Canada. That you might as well forget what you are trying to do.. it's a pipe dream. Nevertheless, we went ahead with this organization with lofty ideals, you know, of coming closer to Canadian society, and at that time we were assisted by certain very broad-minded individuals, you know. Many of them were .... well, in a political philosophy, would be ... now, they would be termed "socialists". They were socialistically inclined in this fight to attain equality with

other Canadians .. we had rather an uphill fight ... a very .. great ... one of the greatest detriment was Japan's ..... actions in China, more than anything, and her rape of Manchuria was something ... it was very well known, and it was in the papers every day. The Chinese people themselves were fighting desperately and I am afraid at times that they made no definition between Chinese Canadians or Japanese Canadians or the Chinese in China or the Japanese in Japan who were doing the actual outrages in Manchuria. Japan went further and her navy was perhaps the strongest in the Pacific or at least the second strongest and she used to flaunt that .. the sabre rattling never helped us at all in our efforts to become part of Canadian society. At the same time, like I said, our parents had more or less given up. In this sort of situation continued over the years .. legislative discrimination that began about 1919, especially among the fishing community, continued and it began to get worse .. it worsened with conditions in Asia. The Asiatic situation had a reflection on the treatment of Japanese Canadians here in British Columbia.

Ms. Koizumi: How was the ... besides fishing, was that kind of restriction or are there many?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, there were all kinds of restrictions by legislation, such as in the Bar Association wouldn't accept you, the Pharmacists', you couldn't become this you couldn't become that, and you were not allowed to buy crown timber- you know that is timber that was on Crown land ... you couldn't bid on it, and the main thing was this lack of franchaise. When you lack franchaise and the politicians were not interested in you, you had nothing to contribute, you had nothing to give them. At the time of election, you were something nice to kick around. The whole attitude at that time is completely different from what it is now. Your generation is taking a complete,

new look. I don't know what caused it, but it's so ... it's so changed now that it is hard to describe the conditions that we lived under at that time.

Ms. Koizumi: The graduates of universities - how did they find jobs? Could they find jobs?

Mr. Suzuki: No. It was very hard for them to find jobs. I think we had one and that was a Rhode scholar, and he finally drank himself to death in one of the logging camps over in Vancouver Island. University graduates working in a grocery store, dry goods store, and the fishermen were well off .. you know, the bills that were allowed to be in the fishing industry under a definite quota which was being cut continuously .. curtailed. We didn't do too badly during the 1930's, that is speaking economically, but for dreamers like myself and others it wasn't a satisfactory situation. We thought that we had to do something to change this.

Ms. Koizumi: How did the Japanese people in your generation react to it? Your political ... and fishermen and longshoremen ....

Mr. Suzuki: We ... in almost every community where there were Japanese Canadians we were able to organize a chapter of those Japanese-Canadian citizens' association or at least .. yes, we called it at that time. Well, everyone .. didn't join it ... nevertheless, we were able to get the thinking people of each locality, each community, to form a local and we more or less were .... well, in the stages of planning, of thinking what steps we shall take next, and I say that we were just in the stage of planning and thinking it because we were still under the dominance of the older Japanese communities, our parents. You see, I would be in my early 20's, and the carry over from the Japanese customs of the Japanese society in Japan, I agree with them,

was just prior to their departure, but still practised over here, and it was very hard for a young person to contradict an elder and say that I disagree with you on a certain subject .. and we .. well, we did organize, we had a most difficult time in making any programmes that could be construed as constructive, but in 1935 or '36, we finally managed to get enough money together, a delegation together .. it's rather odd now when I think about it .. we made a direct approach to Ottawa when the Prime Minister at that time was R.B. Bennett, I think. We made a direct approach, appealing for a franchaise for those of Japanese Canadian origin. We thought that we did not have the right to speak for the other ethnic groups that were denied the right to franchise, and our spokesman at that time - we had our own delegation of four, I think, and then our chief spokesman was Dr. Hayakawa, the Semanticist from California. Oh, I forgot his first name though, but the Dr. Hayakawa was studying at the University of Wisconsin at that time. He was already a professor. He was our spokesman. And, Ed Banno , Dr. Ed Banno from North Vancouver .. let's see, Hide Hyodofrom .... Steveston, of the school teachers, and .. I think there was a young chap named Kobayshi from Steveston that went the same time, and people in Ottawa was rather surprised to find out that they're the so-called Japs that we were hearing about from British Columbia. Many of them in the House of Commons admitted that they spoke better English than they did and they were rather surprised. As a matter of fact, Mrs.Hide Hyodo at that time was mistaken for - well, they have never seen a Japanese .. they have seen Chinese, never Japanese, so they thought that she was Spanish or something, you know, and we made that presentation to the Prime Minister at that time, requesting that we be given equal

rights with other Canadians, and Mr. Bennett was very ... honest about the situation .. he said, "I don't think you have a chance at this time. By the time you're my age that should be possible." And he was quite correct although at that time we ourselves were rather pessimistic that we would ever attain it. Nevertheless, we had to fight and then, well, you know, and struggle for that right .. that was our opinion and that's why we .. and that was one of our first major steps. That was '35 or '36 .. I am not sure.

Ms. Koizumi: Why was it so difficult ....for the Japanese to get that right?

Mr. Suzuki: Well, it was .. we were not given it .. you know, given the right to vote by Law. The first immigrants that came into Canada were not .. were labourers and I think .. they had the idea that they were going ... this is a rich country, that they were not going to go and settle here and after they had made a fair amount of money that, you know, they were going to return back to their old country.. to their home country, which was something just about every immigrant was thinking about till he comes over here - he gets married, there's children that are educated in Canadian schools and then the children seem to change the position of the parents, the attitude of the parents - it is almost compulsory. You can't move after that, you've got to become part of this country, there's no other choice unless you want to leave your children behind or .. your children's influences on you are such that, you know, that right from the very beginning, that the fear of the unknown, the fear of the yellow people, the fear of the oriental, plus the political expediency amongst those that were already in power, denied us the right, denied persons of oriental origin the right to vote. And this situation kept up until 1948.

Ms. Koizumi: What kind of politicians were there? Were politicians ambitious?

Mr. Suzuki: Very ambitious politicians ... mostly, they were Liberals and Conservatives - mostly.

Ms. Koizumi: Are they educated people?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, very well educated people, very well meaning people and .. but they knew that we had a saying, they knew which side of the bread the butter was on, they knew how to get in, this fear of the oriental was used as a platform, that they are taking their jobs away from them, that their standard of living is low, much lower than yours and then a Jap can just exist on rice and fish alone and how do you expect to compete with those people. They'll take your jobs, they'll lower your standard of living, etc., etc., you know. And then on top of that, by the time you got into the 1930's there was the question of the fear of Japan's military strength. What she was doing in China .. the exaggeration, maybe not exaggeration, that this thing was .. constantly brought to their attention of the general public by the Chinese who were living here in Canada, and I don't blame them one bit, and then the Japanese sabre rattling, willing to take on the American Navy,the British Navy and all that, you know .. it didn't help the situation one bit. We never had the right to vote. Even ... the only people that had something ...well, quite close to equality were those who had served in the 1914-18 War in the Canadian Army. They had certain restrictions-that is, legislative restrictions removed, from then ...and they were able to, if they had enough ambition, more or less do what .. do what the other average Canadians were doing.

Mr. Hodgins: You mentioned the arguments used by these ambitious

politicians, but what sort of arguments would the responsible people use, like the Prime Minister, how would he rationalize the situation or justify it?

Mr. Suzuki: There wasn't a question of rationalizing or justification - it was a political reality that he recognized at that time. The thinking of the people at that time, that is the adults of that time, the leadership of that time ... it's so completely different from your thinking at the present time, you know. It's ... it's amazing, and that goes for both sides - there were angels and devils on both sides. The thinking was very similar. Perhaps, one thought through an oriental mind, the other thought through an occidental mind, but the fear of the unknown, the rationale - if you want to call it - was ... well, something that even a grade school child would laugh at at the present time. But, nevertheless, it existed, it was a reality, a political reality, recognized by the leaders at that time. And in ... in the situation the cry of the socialist for equality for all persons in Canada - such fine men as Angus McGuinness, for instance, and some of the others. Well, they could hardly be heard.

Ms. Koizumi: They used to speak on radios or ..?

Mr. Suzuki: Oh yes. They did everything. They did everything possible, especially, the most of the ... C.C.F., the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, as they were known at that time, and one of the best spokesmen, the strongest spokesman was Mrs. McGuinness' husband, Angus McGuinness. I have known him. But, he jeopardized his political position by speaking out, and I can remember during that, when this thing came to almost a .. a peak situation where there was almost a hysterical condition against persons of Japanese origin, when Mr. McGuinness kept on fighting for our cause to speak

out in Parliament, to speak out publicly, to write Mr. and Mrs. McGuinness about .. I can remember asking Mr. McGuinness not to go and continue, not to continue because, you know, "you're going to hurt yourself". There were others, like Dr. Norman Black, who was Principal of one of the major high schools in Vancouver - he used to speak out sometimes, and we were afraid, definitely afraid, that, you know, .. well, they were being ostracized by their own society, and we didn't want that to happen because try as they might, we knew that ... at least it was our opinion at that time that .. you were not going to make any headway.. that they were only going to hurt themselves .. that their answer was, you know, very, very brave ... that if you don't fight for what you believe in, then what is the use, you might as well forget about the so-called socialist political movement that we belonged to.

Ms. Koizumi: Sometimes you never realize that people felt that kind of speckling ... like if you go to some restaurant and you felt this for some reason. What do you ...

Mr. Suzuki: There was a certain amount of ... physical .. from time to time, you know, .... physical engagement, but it didn't go that way insofar as the Japanese were concerned. Somehow or rather, we were different from the Chinese. The Chinese, to my way of thinking - I don't know - I think that they are more philosophical, more intelligent.. they've been through it in their own country and I guess they learnt to accept the inevitable, but persons of Japanese origin seldom have ever accepted that inevitable - if someone came at you he did the best he could do to go and answer back, and I think if you'd look back to the 1907 riots you would find out that the Chinese had their town wrecked, whereas when the same mob came down

to Powell Street where the Japanese were .. I could still remember some of the old tenants .. I think that there's one still alive now .. they had .. they were all ready to fight back. It's a whole totally different situation, different philosophy among the .. between the two peoples, the Chinese and then the Japanese Canadians. One took it, the other didn't. And they took out with their swords and I think they blocked the street out, if I remember correctly, it was about ten ... ten in a line, and they had the first line consisting of 30 with swords and they were ready, and they stopped the mob and all along Powell Street on both sides, these old timers were telling me that women had worked harder and broke bottles ... rocks, you name it, and they stopped the mob from coming through what is known as "Little Tokyo", you know, Powell Street, and they did stop them. And, as a matter fact, when the mob came they even went so far as to charge for a while and then they stopped. This gave the Chinese encouragement to make a little resistance and, you know, the next time the mob went to Chinatown. And, in the meantime, Mr. McKenzie-King who later became Prime Minister of Canada ... he was sent out here to see what he could do to pacify the people, you know. It was solely the orientals. So, Japanese never did .. encounter too much physical violence. We weren't, you know, we weren't aggressive. We weren't, shall I say, pugnacious, but if somebody pushed we seldom ran away, and it was known, and if that is known well, then, ... then, insofar as physical violence was concerned, we would be left alone. But, the verbal part continued .. it was something we couldn't fight. It was like trying to fight a mist, you know, .. it just disappeared, you just landed, you just couldn't fight back sort of a situation - this political aggression against us - this political .. thing that existed, and we knew that the more Japan rattled sabres and the more

she shouted, the more battleships she built, we of Japanese origin in Canada would continue to feel it more and more.

Ms. Koizumi: At that time, there are a lot of the Japanese-Canadians who, maybe ... you know, all the people who are sort of pleased that Japan was becoming more and more great.

Mr. Suzuki: I think there could have been some, you know, for .. for personal solace to ... to say, well, I think they used the word, "Mi-di-na", "well, they are pretty good, aren't they?" you know, sort of an idea. But, in view of the fact that what Japan was doing was affecting their lives here I don't think they took very ... too kindly to it. Well, they might have made statements to the effect that ... that's a great country I originated from or I left. Nevertheless, it is an actual fact that because Japan did not recognize a Japanese person, overseas, as being a citizen of that country .. even though he had,say, like in my father's case, the British naturalization certificate .. once he came to Japan he was forced to serve his time in the military, or something like that. Hardly any Japanese of military age ever left Canada for Japan, so that goes to show you how deep their, you know, feelings toward Japan was. It was very, very superficial. There was something said on the spur of the moment by a person who was pushed around in this country, more in anger, more in frustration than anything else. But, there were people like the ... like you say, like that who .. who would, well, verbally admire Japan for her .. for her strength over there. Just as unreal, you know .... just like the others without realizing what Japan was doing to the people on the Chinese mainland, to the Korean people. You know, it's a funny thing about human beings .. as long as it doesn't concern you directly, you just ..unless you're

a thinking person you don't realize those things. You cried, you protested, because the average Canadian wouldn't grant you the franchise, wouldn't let you do this, wouldn't let you do that. Yet, at the same time, over on the other side, people of the same racial origin, of the same attitude and maybe worse, insofar as the Koreans or the Formosans or the Chinese were concerned.... that you know so .. it's one of these things that, I think, many of us who were in this Japanese-Canadian citizens league realized we were almost .. dreamers. Even though we were in the middle of a fight for equality, fighting the best way we could, putting our heads together to see what the next step should be, we didn't expect to win, we didn't expect to make any headway, we were realistic to that extent.

Mr. Hodgins: At that time, was your long-range aim assimilation or sacriculture?

Mr. Suzuki: At that time.... our ideas hadn't advanced to the question of total assimilation into the country, but what we had in mind was total equality and contribution as a separate ethnic group towards Canadian society, a Canadian nation, not .. you know .. as individuals and as a group .. that we were not going to do anything that would harm Canada.

Mr. Hodgins: With that in mind then, to what extent did you rely on Japan for culture reinforcement, I would say?

Mr. Suzuki: We were not so concerned about the cultural aspect of it. We were isolated to an extent where the cultures of Japan, if you could call it as such, was already here, and it was practised in the Japanese society, whether it be Steveston, whether it be up North, whether it be in Vancouver or around here. And the more we practised the culture of that country at that time .. the country

of my father's origin at that time, the more suspect we became in the eyes of the Canadian public, and we were very, very careful. We cautioned our elders - we were very, very careful. It wasn't admired as it is at the present time or encouraged as it is at the present time (cough) .. it was .. it came to a situation where some of the Japanese ... where the Canadians or Japanese origin were almost ashamed of the culture of the land of their fathers. So, ...

Ms. Koizumi: Were there some Japanese who tried to give up eating rice or Japanese food to become Canadian?

Mr. Suzuki: Well, I think ... you mean at that time?

Ms. Koizumi: Yeah.

Mr. Suzuki: No, no, but food is a habit forming thing and it all depended on where you were. If you lived in an area where Japanese food stuffs were readily available, yes. I think it became a habit to eat Japanese foods, whereas if you lived away from there and from childhood grew up on a normal Canadian diet, well then, if you were given the two of them you would prefer the regular Canadian diet... one wouldn't give the other up ... no, it was just a matter of .. how you were brought up, and where.

Mr. Hodgins: What about language? Did the ... the older generation encourage you to forget your language.

Mr. Suzuki: No. They encouraged us to retain our language - they had language schools, and there again we had language schools in the afternoon and after the regular school hours and they would put in an hour or two in a language school, and this too was a source of ... a very sore point insofar as the general Canadian public was concerned, and we were very suspected .. these schools were teaching

Japanese militarism, more Japanese culture or something of that nature. You know that was detrimental to the Canadian society - "I told you so, look at the God damned Japs there, here they are .. they are in their own schools." I, for one, butted on these grounds that once a child has gone to school, put in his full time, you know, with the rest of the Canadians, it isn't only his social contact during school hours .. it's the afterschool hours .. contact that would be, you know, lacking between the two groups, and this would not solve the situation or better the existing situation, but it would worsen it because the very necessary contact between myself and you would be lacking because it was necessary to continue this hour or two of schooling after your regular hours... and the parents encouraged it ... we were ... I didn't go .. I think I had been to the Japanese school about four days or so, about 15 to 20 minutes each time, and the only language I know is rather coarse military terms, learned in the Military Language School (laugh), plus the language that was used by my father and my mother which was .. with a very distinct North-eastern accent, Tohoku accent. A polite language, but gutteral almost, perhaps, two-tongued Japanese (chuckle), Nordic Japanese ... slow, sloppy, not this latin type that the Southern people - you know, this quick .. fast Japanese. So, that's the way I learnt Japanese.

Mr. Hodgins: I think the tape's done, Maya ....

END OF TRACK 1

Mr. Tatsuro Buck Suzuki
November 9, 1972.

Interview No. 103, Tape No. 2 of 3, Track 2

Mr. Hodgins: Yes, we were going to talk about Unions. I want to ask you about .. the tendency of the B.C. Unions to be racists, although they were progressive in so many ways, even radical types.

Mr. Suzuki: Yes. That is correct and the history, the past history, had a lot to do with it. Now, I am speaking from a point of view of a person in the '30's when the situation insofar as the Japanese-Canadians were concerned, it became very acute, but when I say "history" I mean from the beginning of .. when the Japanese .. persons of Japanese origin first came to Canada. Firstly, they were very ignorant of ... of the needs and wants of .. the society of Canada at that time. As a matter of fact, it wasn't the only Japanese, persons of Japanese or Chinese origin, were suspected. Anybody that wasn't Anglo-Saxon was known as the "squarehead" or a "hunkie" - "bohonk" or something of that nature, and when a person is distinctly different comes in this sort of a mention, then you can just well imagine what dominant labour of that time .. their attitude would be towards orientals. And, the oriental without his franchise, with this sort of a situation existing in society where even the working man was against him, sometimes had only one way to lean and that was leaning towards the side of the employer. He had no other choice, and at the same time the employer would take advantage of that situation and pay him less. You either take less and work for me or else sort of idea. He had no choice. He worked harder for less money than the average .. non-Japanese or non-oriental Canadian, and you know, people in those days if they had 8 years of schooling was quite a scholar. Most of them, you know, here in Canada, that is

the average Canadian, could hardly write his name, and when a politician got up and he spoke against the threat to your livelihood, to your standard of living, because these .. orientals, the "yellow peril" as they called it at that time, well then boy, you guys had better do something about it, and labour was very, very antagonistic, and as a result, like I say, they leaned towards the companies and the companies used them for their own benefit ... if the average organized .. you know, Canadian labour demanded too much, well, they say, "Look, we don't need you, we'll get the Japs to go and do this for us. So, we'll get the Chinese to do this for us," or something like that. And, this .. this kept on accumulating and accumulating .. there was no... no spokesman amongst the Japanese community who could explain this sort of a situation. As a matter of fact, .. maybe, in a lot of the cases the leadership in the Japanese Community didn't want to explain. He was one of the worst exploiters of his own people, of his own racial extraction, even worse than the average Canadian employer, and this sort of a situation continued .. it continued into the '30's when ... at the beginning of the economic depression .. that came about all over the world. It was very pronounced in Canada... the result of that was that labour movement in Canada became .. especially in British Columbia, became more dominant... even though they became dominant we were not invited to join that group because of this previous background that existed, you see. They didn't want us at all .. they didn't want the Japanese-Canadians at all .. they wanted them out of this continent.

Mr. Hodgins: Were attempts made to approach these people and try to get into the unions?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes .... I, for one, was one of them. We tried to get

into the Fishermen's Union .. I think that there were others that tried to get into the various unions such as the Pulp Mill Workers' Union, I think, up on Ocean Falls. They were part of the pulp workers' union for a while, but, again, the union in those days .. they tolerated the double scale .. two standards of wages, one for the orientals and one for the non-orientals, and it was a .. I don't know why, without realizing I guess they thought it was a mark of prestige - I can't think of any other reason why they would tolerate such a situation. I, for one, used to point out that the chain only is strong as its weakest link, and you are putting in this weak link in hereby depriving the right to the workers of oriental origin and putting them in the working link. I said that the chain is always going to break clear whenever you get into a fight, into a negotiation, into an argument, with your boss .. that weak link is going to break, it can't help but break, it's not strong, you're not willing to make it any stronger ... we tried to put this point across, but this constant fear, this prodding by the politicians, the savour rattling break your pan ... the defeatist attitude of some of the leaders in the Japanese community ... it all added up to a most disheartening situation insofar as persons of my .. you know, like my age were concerned ... my age group.

Mr. Hodgins: Well, to what extent did you find the .. perhaps, you can call socialist leaders or organizers of these unions were willing to compromise their principles to maintain their member, please their membership, or whatever? Was that a factor too or did these people try and get the Japanese in? Mean .. was there any sympathy in the labour union?

Mr. Suzuki: The extreme leftwing did try, but .. politically, I think or philosophically, because politically we weren't involved. Philosophically, it wasn't acceptable to .. the Japanese community as a whole. When I say "extreme left", that was the communist, and they were not sincere - they were not principled in their approach. They wanted strength, they wanted membership .. that was the way I think, anyway, that was the reason why they made the approach at that time. And, yes, there was that group, but even that group shied away because later on we didn't know which way to turn. When I say "we", the Japanese community, didn't know which way to turn, so we had our own associations - it wasn't the union exactly in that sense. There was an association, a gathering ... of people in a certain line of industry to protect themselves ... to better themselves, and once you set up a leadership ... well, a leadership too is reluctant and let that leadership go. I think that had a lot to do with .. power not making .. gains towards cooperation and unity with trade union movement as a whole.

Mr. Hodgins: To what extent were unions necessary in the industries .. the Japanese were prominent in fishing?

Mr. Suzuki: It was very, very necessary because .. we knew that salmon was a prime product, that there was a demand for it, that the price that we were being paid was not an honest price ... that ... when the fishing was poor the price was good .. when the fishing was bad .. no, no .. when the fishing was good the prices were poor ... when the fishing was bad then the prices would go up .. there was no reason for that. It wasn't something that you placed on the open market .. it was something you put in cans for overseas export, and there was no reason why the prices should fluctuate to that extent, but it did

fluctuate up and down, up and down, and they had it ... salmon which was the chief specie of fish caught .. you know, for export .. you could just about tell within a few days as to when and where each specie would come, so based on that knowledge they would, as soon as the fish would come the companies would lower the price. You would never know what you were going to get for your fish until ... the fish collectors, as we called them, company .. boats that would come along and collect fish from the fishermen and then deliver to the company. Till they came around .. to your boat you'd never know what the price was going be. And ...

Mr. Hodgins: How much cooperation ... excuse me, go ahead.

Mr. Suzuki: And, this situation was intolerable .. you could never make any plans or you weren't making any headway, and ... it was necessary to ... have an organization ... very necessary to have an organization so that we could put our demands before the operators.

Mr. Hodgins: In view of that, I was wondering what .. what sort of relations you had with the other unions because basically they were white unions?

Mr. Suzuki: We had ... there was nothing that you could call 'cordial', and this was the major reason why .. persons of Japanese origin, even though he had a licence to fish, his area of operation was restricted. In other words, people around here couldn't go pass the .. Gibsons landing. You couldn't go further North .. people that fished had licence to fish between Gibsons landing and say .. Port Hardy. They could fish in that area ... they couldn't fish down here, they couldn't fish up there, you know, anywhere else. Then the people that fished in the Skeena River area they .. and the Nass area, they must remain in that area, they couldn't come down south, whereas the other Canadians-

he could range the entire coast ... if he struck in one place here for a higher price and say that the strike continued for 2 or 3 weeks the salmon would be gone but he wouldn't be worried. He'd go to another area and recuperate ... this was one thing we couldn't do as Japanese Canadians and we had to face the reality .. the economic reality - if we lose that season, what are we going to do? You know, things were hard enough as it is. So, when the request was made for cooperation the cooperation was hardly given - we had to be realistic about the situation. Yes, we wanted better prices, just as much as anybody else, but we could only fight so far and the companies knew this, we knew it, but the other people disregarded that .. they didn't think that far. "What the hell is the matter with the Japs. They let us down again. They went out on scab or they are willing to scab or they are weak .. that they won't hold the strike," ... and having said that they wouldn't think little further to realize just why these people, you know, wouldn't support them to the ultimate .. because they were the weak link in the chain. You know, we are both .... and as a result this situation just continued to detiorate .... and it became so bad in the end that I think that the Trade Union were just about as strong and antagonistic group as any in British Columbia. The educated, the thinking people, perhaps, other than politicians, were much better .. people of religious philosophies were very tolerant or at least they were much more tolerant.

Mr. Hodgins: Would you say it was a .. mainly suspicion of the communists .. that was the reason for not really going along with them except for their way of organizing .. when they were doing so much organizing in the '30s?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, because .. the communists themselves were suspected

by regular organization, that is the powerful trade union movement in British Columbia. The only ones that were willing to accept the Japanese were the extreme left-wingers, and we knew that they had no power for one thing and suspect by the other Canadians was another thing .. so, we were just in that bind.

Mr. Hodgins: You mentioned "philosophical suspicion" within the Japanese community to sort of .. was it a reluctance to accept some of the ideas ...?

Mr. Suzuki: Labour ... Japanese at that time .. and I think .. to a very great degree, even yet, are very .. they are not that in their thinking. I think they're ... more ..would you say, perhaps they could have advanced to a liberal stage now, but at one time they were .. ultra .. ultra-conservative in their philosophy, and that didn't make matters any (chuckle) better for us ...

Mr. Hodgins: I suppose not.

Mr. Suzuki: No.... so,here we were caught in this thing and yet, nevertheless, we had to fight .. we had to keep on fighting because we realized that .. that was the only thing we could do .. we couldn't remain still .. we realized the injustices .. we realized all these differences. Yet we had faith .. we had faith .. the ultimate faith in the Canadian .. well, it wasn't a Canadian way .. we used to call it "British fair-play & justice" - we had ultimate faith ... but in the end .. they would come around to our way of thinking. Whether it was in my generation or not, we didn't know, but we had faith in the Canadian people.

Mr. Hodgins: What plans did you have to break down .. some of the other barriers besides, I mean .. lack of the franchise.

Mr. Suzuki: Well, lack of franchise is .. was the main thing .. main

reason why .. there were restrictions, you know, and other barriers, and the actual thinking of the people at that time, whether they were of oriental origin or of European origin, was very shallow. The depth of their .. thinking, their philosophy, except for the scholars, was very, very shallow. Striving for something to keep their family going was the uttermost in their minds - anything in the way, "boy, get out". That was their attitude, and you couldn't blame them. It's not like .. at the present time where you have unemployment insurance, where you have welfare, where you have all these various aids, government aids .. you know, they help you. Those things were non-existent and it was just a matter of "dog eat dog", and .. that situation exists among the illiterate people. Then, you know the results of it .. they are easily swayed by those who would make the political games .. those people .. and we were being used ... the Chinese got off much easier because, you know, they were ....steeped in their philosophy, much more experience .. in being pushed around, you know, for many years in their home country and out of that they followed this philosophy of absorbing, of tolerance, you know .. we didn't have that.

Ms. Koizumi: How was that ... how were you involved in the War, was it before, when the war started?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes. When the war started I was Secretary of what was known as the "Upper Fraser Japanese Fishermen's Association", and I was their, what they called English Secretary. I used to keep Minutes and take part in .. whatever communications we had with the federal .. government authorities and the unions, and ... it is rather hard to believe, but when Pearl Harbour was announced over the radio we were just.. you know, we were putting our boats away, and it was

over the radio .. and I could hardly believe that such a thing could happen ... although, having said that...we knew that it was a very dangerous situation. I was one of the six who were chosen as advisers to the Japanese community on this question of ... race difficulties, and communication with Canadian society in general in case of ... possible further deterioration in the conditions. We didn't think that there was going to be war, but in case there was further detioration in the relation between Japan and Canada. But, we realized we were going to feel it so the question is "what do we do then?" I was one of the six chosen at that time.

Ms. Koizumi: When was the committee formed?

Mr. Suzuki: The Committee was formed by a vote of the various chapters, you know, of the Japanese Canadian citizens' league .. in British Columbia, and when we met the military .. representative .. that was around 1930 .. late 1938 and the early part of 1939 ... he warned us of the possibility of internment of some people, should there be a conflict between Japan and the West, and we weren't totally ignorant of what might have happened or what could happen, but we never dreamt that the Canadian government would go to the extent that it did without making any ... without any, shall I say, separation between Japanese nationals and Japanese Canadians who were Canadians by birth or naturalization. We didn't think that it would affect us at all, but, nevertheless, after Pearl Harbour the authorities knew to what extent the damage was, we didn't .. but no one in Canada knew for a long time .. the Canadians, especially on the Coast here in British Columbia, panicked and they thought that the best, safest thing would be to .. was to remove the persons of Japanese origin from the coastal area here. But, the first thing that they did decide on was to immobilize all the Japanese fishing boats.

I can remember the evening of Pearl Harbour in this community .. I just lived here .. I was right here ... there was only one or two telephones in this whole area for miles around you and the houses weren't as close as they are now, and the storekeeper up here came down and said that the Commander of the Navy in Vancouver, Harry, wants to see you tomorrow morning. So, I went into Vancouver about nine o'clock as soon as they were open and the officer in charge of the Western Command area said to me, "Mr. Suzuki, I am afraid we have been caught with our pants down. This is what we are going to do. We are going to mobolize all Japanese fishing boats and we expect your cooperation." Well, what could you say? It was on and that what it was - all boats were mobilized, naval auxiliary boats were sent up, up and down the coast, and they took all the boats away and held them in one .. one place here .. in New Westminster. They made a place there and ... tied them all up under naval guard, and that was the end of ... insofar as the Japanese fishing community was concerned, until 1949.

Mr. Hodgins: In what ways have the ... have the relations with ... the white community in Canada deterioration in the late '30s that inspired you to form that committee?

Mr. Suzuki: This committee was ... well, because we suspected, and the Canadian authorities know .. just by .. even by radio and news media .. you can just about tell .. the further deterioration in conditions between say, it was the United States and Japan at that time and they could have very well .. you know, it didn't look nice, it didn't look good ... so ... and in the meantime what was happening in Europe .. alliance with Germany and Japan. All these things,you know, gave us a very deep sinking .. feeling in the pit of our stomachs in case something happened. So, ... not that we could do

anything, not that we had any answers ... nevertheless, any group must have someone that they can consult with or someone who can strive to do some thinking for them and I was one of the six chosen at that time.

Mr. Hodgins: Did you have any .. criticism of the .. or were you critical yourself of the government decision? You know, trying to be objective about what they were doing at the time, what did you feel about it?

Mr. Suzuki: After the war ...you know, it started and .. we could see this situation deteriorating .. day by day .... we realized .. what is inevitable, you know, at least to one group at .. in the beginning and then to the total Japanese community. I realized it, anyway, being in close contact with the others .. other Canadian people. As a matter of fact, ... there was hardly anything that I ever stayed away from any of the social functions or, you know, in going up .. going down in the average normal Canadian society that is within my sphere .. I was always there, then I realized that .. this thing was going to get out of hand .. I realized finally the ultimate, but the Japanese ... old timers, that is our parents, (cough) and the people already dependent on the parents for advice - that is, what do you call them, " Kibu ?" or those .. some were educated in Japan though they were of Canadian origin, some of them that had come from Japan and was still, you know, quite young. They were dependent on their advice to the old timers, to the people like my parents, and I can remember going down to Steveston and having quite a time. This was, oh I forgot, it must have been around February, and I told them that "you'd never fish again". Well, it's a total gathering of all persons down here who were in the fishing industry, and I told them that there'd be no more fishing for them, that this is the end, that if they have

anything to sell, go ahead and sell, right now - all your gear, everything you've got, sell, pretty soon there would even be a market for it, and one old timer .. he got up absolutely furious... he said, "You green kid, you punk, you still got an egg shell stuck to your posterior. What the hell you know what's going on or what's going to happen, that we have men here that we have paid for and sent to Ottawa to speak on our behalf. We are going out fishing again." He says, "If you don't shut up we'll go and fix you." Well, I felt very sorry for that person, you know, because, my goodness gracious, he certainly doesn't understand. I feel sorry for him. He's desperate. He's not taking it out on me personally, but I am the easiest person to lash out at, and I thought, "My God, is this all we understand of Canadian society," but I repeated it and I sat down, and it wasn't much more than about six weeks later that it became an actual fact that we were going to be moved from the coastal area, that we would never go back fishing, that there would be a disposal of all ... boats held by the Japanese and their property and ... the situation was worse than what we had anticipated - it was around 1939. As a matter of fact, those of .. those of us who were Canadian citizens and naturalized British subject.. we had less protection than the Japanese nationals, that is those who had not taken out naturalization papers but yet were residents in Canada - they had the Consul-General from Spain and Argentina to look after them whereas we had no one to look after our affairs, and I for one objected very strongly when he tried to .. include us within this, you know, area of ... responsibility. I thought what in the world is going on here. Just because Japan.. military state ... here, you are trying to get a fascist representative to represent me, a Canadian citizen, (chuckle) you know ... I.... it was ... I didn't

what the average Canadian did to me - it was still within the family, but to get this foreigner and a fascist at that to go and try and represent (chuckle) you, boy ... it sure did not go down very well with me, and I think that is just about one of the .. only things that really hurt me, you know, very deeply.

Mr. Hodgins: In the initial stage though, when you were first told that the boats were going to be called in, did you have a chance to object or point out to the people that there would be no source of food, or anything like that?

Mr. Suzuki: We had ... we tried to point out to them, but, you know, war is different than under normal conditions. There's no rhyme or reason for actions taken by the military- an order is an order. They say, "Put things away," you put things away. "You stop," you stop, that was it. The government immobilize your boat, that's it. You bring it to a certain place, that's it. You had no chance to object. But, once the evacuation started, then we ... we had two choices - to object and you know what that meant - it would mean that the authorities would have to use force. If they use force, well then, what .. what about your responsibility as an advisor... as a representative, are you doing the utmost for them? And, realizing that we tried to act in a sort of advisory capacity, in a consultant capacity, between the Canadian governments and the .. you know, authorities and community. But then, our .. our own community, the Japanese Canadian communities split into three - one that was close to the Police authorities over the years - he was all for going'hollus-bollus'along with the government, order - no questions asked and if there is any question asked they would use actual force to see that the government order was enforced. Our attitude was that we must see if we can bargain and come to an agreement that would hurt the community the least. And,

then there was the third group that said, "Under no circumstances will we be separated from our wives and children. That we go as a whole or we fight," and it was the most unrealistic, you know, situation. When able bodied persons from 16 to 60 only numbered 6,000, what sort of resistance are you going to put up? So, we realized this, so, ours, even though we were called down by certain sections of the Japanese community, our approach as a Japanese Canadian citizen lead us to cooperating, to make the movement as easy as possible, with at least friction, and we didn't want to see anybody hurt. That was our main responsibility. Riots, you know, the aftermath of riots. Well, you might have rioted, you might have fought back for a principle, but once a person is dead he won't come back, and that was our main responsibility. When you realize the inevitable then you have to accept it, but having said that we wanted to do the best we could.

Ms. Koizumi: Was it difficult?

Mr. Suzuki: Well .. like, I think it was very well said by the Emporer of Japan at the time of unconditional surrender and I think, what was inferred there? To ... to endure the unendurable, that was the job, and it was somewhat like that, you know. Like yourself, being young - myself, I was involved possibly at your age. You know, when you see the injustice of it all and you see your loved ones just dragged away, damn, to hell with your life, you .. you want to lash back. This one young lady said to me to be (chuckle).."I would have been shot down in flames before I gave up, under, you know, such circumstances," (chuckle) ... she is a university ... she is in university now doing .. I think, television work. But, anyways, I would have been shot down in flames .... "No," she says, "I would have never accepted this." Having said that, that was a luxury that we could not indulge ourselves -

we had leaders, we as people picked to lead, to advise ... it was our responsibility to see that these people were not hurt.

Mr. Hodgins: Apart from leadership in your community, did you have any spokesman in any of the circles of power .. well, in Ottawa specifically, was there anybody on your side at all in Ottawa?

Mr. Suzuki: No. Even the justice minister and everyone else were all against us, and the people that were for us - the most prominent were the United Church of Canada here, and Angus McGuinness - he spoke out right to the very end.

END OF TRACK 2

Suzuk, Buck

103:3

MR. TATSURO BUCK SUZUKI

November 9, 1972

"BRITISH NAVAL INTELLIGENCE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA"

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He worked for the Intelligence Service in the British Navy in South-east Asia.

Oral History Project, Vancouver, Cultural Communities Series

Interview No. 103, Tape No. 3 of 3, Tracks 1 , Speed 3 3/4

Vancouver, Oral History Project, 1972.

Mr. Tatsuro Buck Suzuki
November 9, 1972.

Interview No.103, Tape No. 3 of 3, Track 1

Mr. Suzuki: ... they had church people, they had other thining people, but mostly people who were socialist ...CCF'ers as we called them ... they were the ones that, you know, stood by certain principles, principles of fair play and justice and they objected very, very strongly.

Ms. Koizumi: How .. what kind of activities did your committee do?

Mr. Suzuki: In the end they were just a matter of facilitating the vacuation. You know, it was inevitable - the thing was staring us right in the face and we had to make it as easiest as possible. In most cases the menfolk were moved out first - all able bodied men were moved out first and that left the women and the children here to pack up what they had left and were allowed to take with them .. you know, go to the train and be taken to the interior ... well, it was the most frightening thing for most people and ... it was our job to see to that these people .. didn't suffer so much .. we formed groups of younger people .. to .. help them pack, help them move, gave them instructions on what to do ... you know, all the various things that were necessary for further movement away from here .. we tried to do.

Mr. Hodgins: How much time did you have after Pearl Harbour before the order came out, giving the final date?

Mr. Suzuki: I do believe that it was some time in .. in March .. when order came out for the total evacuation of all persons of Japanese origin - before that a number of persons of Japanese origin who were Japanese nationals and who were considered to be able bodied were moved into ... labour work camp along the CP and the CN rail-

line .. to do .. you know, work along there ... they were moved away from the coast, but they were Japanese nationals and later on it didn't make any difference whether you were national or Canadian citizens or naturalized British subjects.

Ms. Koizumi: So, at the beginning there was some distinction?

Mr. Suzuki: In the very beginning there was some distinction .. yes, insofar as the movement was concerned.

Ms. Koizumi: Like .. people who were born here could choose the places where they wanted to go?

Mr. Suzuki: No, no. They were not forcibly moved away from the coast. They were standing in Denver, sort of, not knowing what was going to happen to them.

Ms. Koizumi: Was it at the beginning they thought they could stay here?

Mr. Suzuki: There was a faint hope that perhaps somehow, you know, you would be allowed to stay .... if you were a Canadian citizen or a naturalized British subject.

Ms. Koizumi: When was it that you found out that you couldn't stay then .. you and your friends .. were you very angry?

Mr. Suzuki: No, we didn't have time to be angry. We had to look around immediately. Now, what do we do? Those were the things that were (chuckle) too rich, too luxurious for us to enjoy. Sure, I was, you know, personally, even though I was doing something ... I was quite upset, but still at the same time .. this constant task before you, you know, kept you busy.

Mr. Hodgins: In the interim between the attack on Pearl Harbour and the order to move you out, what .. what was the press reaction .. what treatment did the whole thing do?

Mr. Suzuki: Oh, the press was very hostile. The Vancouver Sun was especially hostile. The Province tried to .. be a little more reasonable. The Sun was very, very hostile. Most of the radio stations were hostile .. and it reflected the opinion of the general public.

Mr. Hodgins: When you say "general public", do you mean on the West Coast?

Mr. Suzuki: On the West Coast.

Mr. Hodgins: What do you think the rest of Canada?

Mr. Suzuki: The rest of Canada did not know what the Japanese looked like, in most cases, and ... I guess having read and heard from British Columbia, you know, what horrible people we were, they were rather surprised when later on many of them moved to various parts of Canada - they found out that they were not quite .. at least they did not have horns on their heads, anyway, and treatment in general, I think, is to Canada's everlasting credit, and that is East of the coast here of British Columbia, that they accepted you more or less for what you were, and it is a very, I think, it's a very hard thing to do because, when you take a look at the physical similarities between the enemy your son, your father was fighting and the person in your midst and still being able to abide by certain principles for fair play and justice and give those persons a chance to work to remain within your community, they even welcomed you within their society and their church, I think it's to Canada, the rest of Canada's everlasting credit. It's something that I am quite sure would have been impossible in Japan, for instance, or China or any other country.

Mr. Hodgins: How do you explain the action of the Parliamentarians then .. where the vote goes, one or two people voted against it?

Mr. Suzuki: Well, it's a matter of politics, you see, and they wanted to get in and it was something that had gained such a momentum.. that .. a few socialist voices, like Mr. Angus McGuinness' and his friends' .. could never stop. It was just a real downhill slide and persons with a political future or political ambition would have been absolutely foolish to go and speak against it solely on the basis of principle.

Mr. Hodgins: But, did you think that the people in Parliament felt that they were really responding to strategic need or they were responding to a psychological need?

Mr. Suzuki: I think .. they thought that in order to stabilize the Pacific Coast that it was necessary. I don't think that they actually believed that the Japanese Canadians were going to blow up - you know, that is the real thinking people like the Prime Minister and some of his cabinet members who were from Eastern Canada. I don't think that they believed that we were going to go and blow up British Columbia or anything like that or go around the coast signalling Japanese submarines and warships or anything of that nature, you know. That the situation was so critical here that perhaps in the end their thinking might have turned more towards the protection of those of Japanese origin from the general populus. I think that had a certain bearing on it, and this sort of a ... and I think this was combined in the total evacuation order.

Mr. Hodgins: Well, that's the excuse that's often given at ... how .. how valid and fair do you think that was?

Mr. Suzuki: I think ... under certain circumstances it could have been a fact ... I think that it could have been a fact that .. we would have needed massive protection ... from harm, you know, from

the general public.

Mr. Hodgins: In what circumstances?

Mr. Suzuki: Under any .. under any circumstance .. under normal circumstance .. whether you'd be walking down town, whether you are going to a store or whether you are going to a restaurant, whether you were going to the theatre, I don't think that you would have dared ... it was that bad. You see, the Peer, it was something very hard to explain ... the Peer that existed here, you know, radio shouting all day ... landing His Eminent, invasion His Eminent, you know, that sort of hysteria. And, the weather at that time didn't help any - fog, miserable conflicting reports, you know, everything else, and then the military itself knowing how ... hot a schillacking the American Navy got it at Pearl Harbour .. the advance of the Japanese in South-East Asia and well that really, you know, ... they were frightened too at the same time... they didn't know what was going to happen .. they were afraid because they didn't know the Japanese, they didn't know what he was capable of, what you don't know you fear, what you are afraid of you strike back at .. it was, you know, something like that.

Mr. Hodgins: In those terms then, there must have been a great deal of fear in the Japanese community too. Sure, you didn't know what ... exactly what to expect from this internment?

Mr. Suzuki: No, we didn't know what to expect. We didn't know what to expect, but we ... there was so much to do .. one thing that we didn't want was a riot of any kind, you know.. that would ... precipitate some sort of police or military action aginst any group whereby some persons might lose their lives. Our job was to see to it that they survived this period. We had faith in the Canadian

people that when it was all over that .. you know, we ... that they would come back to their normal senses, so to speak, you know ... I hadn't ... because basically they were good, it was proven they were good, and since then it has was proven that we were correct in our estimate that once the people were settled, well then, we just couldn't leave it at that. We weren't wanted in the Canadian Armed Forces, we weren't taken. I, for one, applied to two spots - I applied in the Merchant Marine and apparently the British Army was having a hell of a time in the jungles there and no linguist, no interpreter, no anyone else, so they came recruiting in Canada ... I think a British captain by the name of "Mollison", Jimmy Mollison, he was, I don't know whether you have heard of this famous flyer,Amy Mollison, a woman aviator or (chuckle) aviatrix - she was a very famous flyer anyway, her cousin came out recruit, so I joined the British Army.

Ms. Koizumi: When was that ... in 1940?

Mr. Suzuki: '44. Then, I was going to go overseas. Then the Canadian Government refused to allow, not myself but the 12 of us altogether, they refused to send us overseas in British uniform or in the British Army, so they demoted us and then ... reluctantly signed us up in the Canadian Intelligence. So, I went over as a member of the Canadian Intelligence on loan to the British Army.

Ms. Koizumi: To where?

Mr. Suzuki: To South-east Asia.

Ms. Koizumi: South-east Asia!

Mr. Suzuki: Yeah.

Ms. Koizumi: um .. Malaysia?

Mr. Suzuki: Um .. Burma, Malaya, .. I was doing some propaganda work

from headquarters radio in South-east Asia command in Ceylon for a while .. years of commentary as we called it .. that .. like a spare tire, you know, moved around from here,there and all over ... first from one unit then the other.

Ms. Koizumi: Was there a radio to the Japanese?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, and ... broadcasting to the Japanese in my version of Japanese.

Ms. Koizumi: That was to the soldiers, no?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, to the soldiers and to the Japanese soldiers in South-east Asia.

Ms. Koizumi: And that was .. the war was not over yet?

Mr. Suzuki: No, no. And, later on I ... joined the War Crimes Investigation Team. I spent a little time there before I came home.

Ms. Koizumi: How was your experience?

Mr. Suzuki: Well, what shocked me was the first time I bumped up against Japanese soldiers; you know, I had heard stories that the Japanese soldiers never gave up - they got to the end and a colonel asked me in one day and said, "Would you go in there and talk to some people. Come on and talk. I'll show you." There was a British Naval officer and Lieutenant-Commander there too, and I went in there and here was a group of people of about 20 of them dressed in civilian clothes, all white, you know - like, in the tropics you wear just about all white. And, I was introduced to them as "Well, this is Mr. Black, this is Mr. White and this is Mr. Brown." (chuckle) I thought what the hell gives here, he is no more Mr. White nor Mr. Black than I am, and their manners and everything was something, you know, I recognized immediately, so we had .. that was part of my job, study of Japanese psychology for propaganda purposes, and I talked to them , and at that time they were very, very

ashamed of the fact that they were prisoners of war - they had been taught different and here they were alive and .. well, I talked to them at quite a length. You know, I guess I could see that they were considering committing suicide sooner or later , the first chance they got, and another surprising thing was that all those that were captured were officers - no soldiers - all officers. They could think,you see, (laughter) despite their training .. in spite of their training they could think a little. The lowest ranking one was a Sergeant-Major, the rest of them were up to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel -- they had given up and they were actually working for the British Army in turning out propaganda.

Mr. Hodgins: How would dissuade these people from committing suicide?

Mr. Suzuki: Well, they ... I couldn't say that I stopped them, but I met them about 6 months later in Singapore ... homeward bound on the British Interpol and they thanked me talking to them and everything else, you know, in the typical Japanese way. "We are heading home now." I said, "All right." Well, when I was talking to them I told them right straight, I said, "Look, I am of Japanese origin, I am a Canadian citizen and am of Japanese origin." I said, "You people had been through the horrors of war and you have done something that was more horrible in your estimation than death. You were taken captive and there you were doing work, but it is if you don't go back to renew Japan and tell the Japanese people all about the horrors of war, not the glories of war as you were talking and as the people think or thought in Japan, who is going to do it?" I said, "I think, you people owe it to your country, to your race, to go back home so that this sort of thing never happens again." That was ... were going to be usual words said to people, you know.

I didn't and I said,"I you want to cut your guts and that's the easiest way out, go ahead and do it. To hell with your people," and I left them in that sort of bain, you know, because it was no use trying to plead with them. So, I found out later that they all headed home. I might have had something ..

Mr. Hodgins: I think you had a good angle there.

Mr. Suzuki: Yeah. I said that, "You have the responsibility to your people, to your country, that it never happens again." That was one. Then another thing that I noticed was ... similarity in human behaviour. When the Japanese were held in Hastings Park here, you know, after they were removed from their own homes they were taken into the horse stables there and they were just given small cubicles with .... curtains, you know, to live in and separate them from some of their neighbours. Well, they had to do washing and everything else ... they would do the washing in the sink and then they would take it out on the grounds in Hastings Park and they'd put little stakes out and then they would be drying their clothes, but then they would be sitting there and guarding those ... their clothes until it was dry, and I found out later that it had to be done because their fellow inmates were stealing, you know. And then, on top of that, the most shameful thing I had ever seen, you know, after that time, Japanese people were noted for being honest. As a matter of fact, people doubt that all Japanese people were honest and we did not dare be anything else but as honest as possible, at least in the public's eye (laughter) because of the conditions we were living in, you know, all during my life. There was a chain lock for toilet paper because toilet paper would disappear as fast as they could go and put it out. Soap was disappearing as fast as

the authorities could go and put the soap out. I thought, "My good God, what's happening to my people, what's happened to these people." You know, you just felt ashamed of them. You know, stealing each other's things on top ... that later on, towards the latter part of the war, when I was able to ... look into the other internment camps, the Dutch internment camps, the Chinese, Indonesians, the British internment camps, I found out that their behaviour was exactly similar to the behaviour of the Japanese people in Hastings Park. Some instinct of survival made them take things, grasp things, hoard things that weren't theirs. It was much more than they could use. Take, for instance, the case of one Japanese - he was caught with a suitcase of toilet paper (laughter). You know, it was hard to understand at that time, but later on I thought,"Well, I guess you're just the same as anyone else. No different." Some instinct of survival may compulse them to do a thing like that. Perhaps, bravery, cowardice in war is the same thing. You never know until you just bump up against it and see what your reaction will be. As far as my going over there was concerned I still wanted to go and continue the deep concern I had for people, you know, Canadians of Japanese origin here because the talk was, "Ship the damned Japs as fast as possible after the war is over. Ship the whole damned works back." It was the only place for them sort of idea and I didn't want that to happen and I thought that if there is any way to go and put brakes on, I was the only one, you know. The others ... we had to prove that we weren't quite that bad and ... between that and ... fight against fascism, militarism. Between the two of them I don't know which of the two principles or philosophies, whichever you might want to call or whatever you might want to call it, something prompted

me to join the army and go over. Perhaps I had two purposes - one for the people and one for the country.

Mr. Hodgins: Did you have any difficulties in the army or were you discriminated against there?

Mr. Suzuki: No.

Mr. Hodgins: Was there any suspicion?

Mr. Suzuki: No, that was the surprising thing about the British ... rank was the only thing. They respected your rank whatever rank it happened to be at that time, and as far as discrimination was concerned I never heard of it. You were a "Ca-ni-dian" (laughter).

Mr. Hodgins: Did you have a rank in the Intelligence Service or was that sort of ..?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes. I finally ended up being a Ward Officer .....

Mr. Hodgins: What were some of your other duties.

Mr. Suzuki: Well, mostly ... interpretation, translation, broadcasting, study, you know, of ...Japanese nature, psychology ..... later on, keeping ... prisoners of war in sort of a satisfactory condition,sort of .... well, there was no fear of riots or anything .. they were very well disciplined, but, you know, to keep into contact for the various movements that were necessary.

Ms. Koizumi: How did the Japanese prisoners react at the beginning?

Mr. Suzuki: They just couldn't understand. They were more concerned about their own conditions, but there is one thing that still lingers in my mind. I brought home ... I was in charge of 260 .. or so wounded and sick soldiers .. British soldiers homeward bound and I was Ward Officer in charge. Well, by that time, the Japanese ... the war was over. The Japanese marines were working as stevedores on the waterfront and I could hear them whisper to each other, "That Japanese, isn't that Sergeant-Major Japanese? Isn't that Ward Officer

Japanese?" I could hear them talking. I didn't say a darned thing. I just kept like I heard nothing. They were really sick, you know, and they could hardly get up the gang-plank and they were looking up the gang-plank and just dreading walking up there. Well, after I had them all ... given the roll call, I asked the Japanese marines there, "Would you help these boys take their equipment up the gang-plank." "Yes sir." (chuckle) They just jumped and it seemed to me, after the war was over, they .. they weren't exactly proud, that they felt relieved that there was somebody, you know, like themselves on the winner's side, you know. It's a funny thing, somebody like yourself on the winner's side .. at least, that's the interpretation I got ... there's no resentment, there was a sort of a .. a pleased feeling, you know, that here there was somebody on the winner's side that they could identify themselves with.

END OF TRACK 1