

Powell Street Neighbourhood Before the Uprooting Interview

Home at 656 Cordova

Betty Toyota (b. 1925) describes the home that she grew up in. She talks about her parents, her siblings, speaking Japanese at home, and attending elementary school nearby. She describes attending Japanese language school after the regular school day.

Excerpt from Landscapes of Injustice oral history interview with Betty Toyota and Joy Trapnell.

KYLA FITZGERALD

Now can I ask about your homelife a little bit? What was your house like?

BETTY TOYOTA

Oh my house is still sitting there –

KYLA FITZGERALD

Yeah, can you talk about that a little bit?

BETTY TOYOTA

In Vancouver. It's really – at that time we thought it was nice and big. But it went way back to the whole side. But you look at it now and it's small. But we all grew up and upstairs –

JOY TRAPNELL

What was the address?

BETTY TOYOTA

Hm?

JOY TRAPNELL

What was the address?

BETTY TOYOTA

It was 656 Cordova Street East. And mom and dad had their bedroom downstairs, there was a big living room, dining room, and a kitchen, and a bathroom at the back. And we stayed upstairs; the front was my brothers room. And at the back, us three girls. We thought it was a real nice house, and it was well kept. My dad loved gardening. He was really into gardening. He would spend hours just sitting out in the back looking after his flowers. Gladiolas and dahlias were his favourite. He wasn't in not much for vegetables, but flowers. I remember the –

KYLA FITZGERALD

Did you speak Japanese at home or did you speak English?

BETTY TOYOTA

Oh yeah we did. Always mom and dad just spoke Japanese all the time. Even before school. When we went to grade one we could hardly speak English. We always spoke Japanese at home, and then when we went to English school we all had to go to Japanese school. Everybody from grade one to grade twelve. And Alexander Street and it's still sitting there, it's quite a big school now. But we all went to school. From grade one to grade six, it was from four o'clock 'til five-thirty. So right after when we'd come home from our elementary school, we just had enough time to grab something to eat and go. And from grade eight, was it? No grade seven 'til grade twelve, it was from six 'til seven thirty.

KYLA FITZGERALD

In the evening?

BETTY TOYOTA

Evening.

KYLA FITZGERALD

Okay.

BETTY TOYOTA

So you know the Japanese kids didn't have time to play around much. You always had to go to Japanese school. And it was compulsory, we just had to go. But another thing was the Japanese, we all got the Japanese school. Even now they have this group reunion groups, right?