

Powell Street Interview

314 Powell Street

Tadao Wakabayashi tells the interviewers about 314 Powell Street. It used to be a restaurant called Fuji Chop Suey, which had a dining room and banquet hall. Tadao recalls dancing in living rooms and at Fuji Chop Suey before the uprooting.

INTERVIEWERS

Can you tell us about 314 again?

TADAO WAKABAYASHI

Well, 314 Powell Street used to be an entrance to a Chinese restaurant run by the Japanese. And upstairs was a banquet room and downstairs was, you know, separate booths. And this where we had our first dance.

INTERVIEWERS

For nisei?

TADAO WAKABAYASHI

The issei allowed us to have a dance.

INTERVIEWERS

What kind of dance was it?

TADAO WAKABAYASHI

Oh the foxtrot – the ordinary, ballroom dancing. [Sound of traffic.]

INTERVIEWERS

Did you guys organize it?

TADAO WAKABAYASHI

Well, we go back a few years from here, we weren't allowed to dance. It was a no-no. Especially if a girl is caught dancing, her name is like a [Japanese term.] [Laughs.] Eventually, they allowed us to dance and right now there's a few issei that condemned us for dancing is dancing themselves, right now. They are good at dancing too. [Laughs.]

INTERVIEWERS

How old were you guys then?

TADAO WAKABAYASHI

Well we were in our prime, you know. Just finished school and so we were up to a lot of things.

INTERVIEWERS

Did you guys try to go other places to dance so the isseis didn't know?

TADAO WAKABAYASHI

We used to go to private house and dance. Practice, yeah.