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University of California
Berkeley, California

Nancy Ikeda Baldwin

This interview series was funded by the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program of the National Park Service, and with the support of individual donors.

Interviews conducted by
Lu Ann Sleeper in 2013

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Nancy Ikeda Baldwin, "Japanese American Incarceration / WWII American Home Front Oral History Project" conducted by Lu Ann Sleeper in 2013, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2015.

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Nancy Ikeda Baldwin

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Interview 1: February 27, 2013

Video file 1

Sleeper: Let's start by telling us your name?

Baldwin: My name is Nancy Ikeda Baldwin.

Sleeper: Can you tell us your birth name, your full name before you were married?

Baldwin: You mean before married?

Sleeper: Yes, your full name please.

Baldwin: Ikeda. Yes, Ikeda is my maiden name. My middle Japanese name was Tsuiko, last name Ikeda. I later married and my last name became Baldwin.

Sleeper: Good, thank you. Where were you born?

Baldwin: I was born in Alviso, California on June 27, 1935.

Sleeper: Which generation were you, Issei, Nisei or Sansei?

Baldwin: I think Sansei, I think, the last one—

Sleeper: Sansei, third generation? Tell me about your family background, what you remember, what you know back to your parents and grandparents, essentially your family origins?

Baldwin: My mother was born in Sacramento, California. And my father in Hawaii.

Sleeper: Hawaii?

Baldwin: Yes, he was actually born in Hawaii, but the doctor was bribed to have it put down as being in Alviso, California. And that's how it has been recorded ever since. My mother's parents were born in Osaka, Japan and my father's parents from Southern Japan, but I don't really know the exact town. My father's parents were born in southern Japan. That's all I know.

Sleeper: Were they all Deaf?

Baldwin: No, on both sides they were all hearing.

Baldwin: Only my immediate family was Deaf; my parents both were born Deaf. My two older sisters, fraternal twins, were both born Deaf.

Baldwin: Next, my older brother was born hearing but later lost his hearing.

Baldwin: Then I was born. I was born hearing but lost my hearing rapidly.

- Baldwin: The last child in my family was born with hearing but also lost hearing.
- Sleeper: What was it like for your parents before World War II? How did they meet each other, and when did they get married?
- Baldwin: At that time, my mother was the only Deaf person in the whole area. My father was on his own. At that time, there were very few Deaf Japanese around. Just a few!
- Sleeper: So, how did they meet?
- Baldwin: My father's friends and family all were either talking about getting married or were getting married at the time. So, they asked, why not him. Even though my father was Deaf, they knew there was a Deaf Japanese woman, so they were introduced and eventually got married. They didn't really know each other; they only knew of each other. Nor did they even know the meaning of engagement. They simply got married, and it was a surprise even to them how rapidly it all happened.
- Sleeper: Your parents lived within the Japanese community, but how did your father feel about racism? Did they experience any rejection, persecution or harassment for their deafness? Or any other experience like that?
- Baldwin: Actually, none. Before the war, there weren't any experiences like that. I don't think so. They appeared happy and were socializing. Not until the war did those experiences occur. But not before, no.
- Sleeper: How many brothers and sisters—tell me again, what are their names?
- Baldwin: I have two sisters and two brothers. Rosie, Annabelle, Ernest, me, Nancy and Samuel.
- Sleeper: You were the youngest?
- Baldwin: No, I'm the fourth one in line.
- Sleeper: Where did you go for school?
- Baldwin: The three oldest, my two sisters and brother, went to the School for the Deaf in Berkeley, California. I stayed home until we were sent to the internment camps. After the war had ended and we were allowed to return home, I then went to the school for the Deaf in Berkeley when I was ten years old.
- I could have gone to Berkeley sooner but didn't want to leave home, and I pleaded with my Mom why I had to leave. Fortunately, my hearing aunt persuaded my parents that I should stay at home to look after their hearing son and keep my cousin occupied with my company. My cousin always made fun

of me being Deaf. At that time, I was very innocent and didn't understand why he made funny faces at me, wiggled hands on his ears and stuck his tongue out at me. I didn't understand it.

Sleeper: So you enrolled at the age ten years. Were there many Deaf Japanese students there at the Berkeley school?

Baldwin: Just my sisters and brother, and—oh yes, there was one other deaf Japanese student, Ron Hirano. That was it.

Sleeper: Only a few of you, not many. What were your parent's occupations before the war?

Baldwin: My father worked as a farmer—my dad didn't have any formal education. He wanted to go to school, in Berkeley, but his parents didn't let him and instead sent him to work on the farm for many years. My mother didn't work while she was young, not really until she got married. Then she worked at a cannery in San Jose, California. She was laid off from that job and later worked as an apricot cutter, peeling fruit.

Sleeper: You grew up in San Jose?

Baldwin: Most of life, yes.

Sleeper: Were your parents involved in the Deaf community?

Baldwin: My mother was not. She didn't like to get involved with the Deaf, preferred to stay quiet. However, my Dad did. He didn't know much sign language, but a deaf man who had met my father taught him sign language, started with gestures and expanded more sign language.

Baldwin: My father went to the local Deaf Club meetings and communicated with other deaf people. I think he was the only Deaf Japanese at that club but he made friends. He made the best coffee at those meetings which everyone loved. Later on, he worked as a bowling pin boy, setting up pins. Later worked as a cook, did some cleaning, and then retired.

Sleeper: Your father, you said, was not educated. Did he learn English, was he able to read or write?

Baldwin: No, he never had any formal schooling. My father was good with money, able to add and subtract. No, he depended on my mother for reading and writing. My mom did go to the School for the Deaf in Berkeley, but only for three days. Only three days! She was extremely attached to her mother and cried constantly in her absence. Her father encouraged her to stay at school, but her mother was also constantly in tears. So her father decided to bring her back home from school after only three days. She did attend a hearing school but

couldn't understand reading Japanese characters. She wasn't happy there and told her father, so she then stayed home. One day a minister at the local church asked her father about her and her schooling. Once it was explained that she was deaf the minister started teaching her to write in English, and she was thrilled learning it. Not sure for how long that went on, but my mother had good English skills.

Sleeper: So your mother was able to read English, but not your father. Was he able to read Japanese?

Baldwin: No. he couldn't read/write Japanese, only his name.

While I was growing up, I didn't know anything until after the war, when I started finding out. When I was a little older, I started to realize that Japanese people looked down at us Deaf people, including my own aunt and uncle. They were hearing, on my father's side. They lived nearby us, but they didn't allow their children to play with us, their own cousins. They would only come for quick visits, write down some information and then take off. There wasn't any socializing or having good time with them. We were completely separate.

Sleeper: It's interesting you said your dad learned ASL [American Sign Language] but not Japanese Sign Language?

Baldwin: Yes. That's true.

Sleeper: How about associating with hearing people, did they look down on you and your family for being Deaf?

Baldwin: Yes.

Sleeper: So, you spent most of your time with your siblings, staying together closely all the time?

Baldwin: Yes.

Sleeper: Let's turn now to the start of WWII. When the attack in Hawaii at Pearl Harbor occurred, how did your parents hear about it? What was their reaction about the Japanese attacking the island?

Baldwin: I was very young, seven years old, and I understood little about it. I remember my parents being shocked, really shocked. Everyone was talking about it. They had heard about it from my aunt and uncle, who communicated with my parents through writing and some gestures. I recall them being shocked.

Baldwin: We all had to go for injections, I mean vaccinations. We had to go in long lines. I was quite young; I had no idea what was going on. I screamed from the pain of the injection. My aunt was embarrassed and told me to hush and to

come back tomorrow without crying and to expect candy. I loved candy. I went back and took it with my eyes shut and was rewarded with candy.

Sleeper: There were injections for all Japanese?

Baldwin: Yes. It was given to all of us who went off to the camps.

Sleeper: Do you recall what the reactions were among Deaf Community members towards you and other Japanese for the bombings?

Baldwin: Don't recall. I really don't know. I think my father and our Deaf friends didn't really know what was going on. They didn't know what was going on and were ignorant of what was going on. I am sure hearing Japanese knew what was happening but not Deaf Japanese. We were innocent and unaware.

Sleeper: Were the hearing Japanese supportive and protective of you and your family?

Baldwin: [shaking head] While at the camp?

Sleeper: No, after the Pearl Harbor bombings, while you still lived at home and in your neighborhood?

Baldwin: Before leaving our home I can't recall that anything was different.

Sleeper: You mean at the farm?

Baldwin: Yes. We lived on the farm but we didn't know or feel any immediate difference after the bombing.

Sleeper: Can you describe your family's reaction to the news about Executive Order 9066? That was President Roosevelt's ordering all enemy aliens—Germans, Italians and Japanese—be sent to an internment camp. What was your parents' reaction or feelings toward that order?

Baldwin: My parents told me they were in shock about it but had to follow the government's orders. We Deaf couldn't hear what others were saying. We were completely dependent on our aunt and uncle to tell us what was happening.

Sleeper: Do you recall what your aunt's emotions were about it? Was she angry?

Baldwin: Yes. I could see that my aunt and uncle were bitter and angry by looking at the expressions on their faces, but I am not sure what their thoughts and feelings were, as they never spoke to me.

Sleeper: So your aunt protected your family, and you stayed with her?

- Baldwin: They were worried about us because we were Deaf, not being able to hear what was going on. Protected? Yes, I guess they did protect us. I remembered them telling me there were seven camps scattered out in USA. The one in Arizona, Gila River, was considered the worst.
- Sleeper: Let's talk about the Order. How did that impact Japanese here? What about your property, your house, household things, your car? Did you have to give up those things?
- Baldwin: We were leasing our farm and didn't own any property. My father valued his car, a convertible. He asked a friend take care of it. The car was the only thing he really valued, no other things. Of course, we took our clothes with us to the camp.
- Sleeper: When you left your home, did you first go to Tule Lake?
- Baldwin: My aunt was checking into finding out where we, a Deaf family, were going. She asked an officer in charge about our deafness, explaining the need to know where we would be sent. My aunt was aware of problems at the Arizona camp and told the officer this wouldn't be a good place for us. The officer questioned why we should not be sent there and then confirmed that would not be a suitable placement once he heard we were Deaf. The irony is that my aunt and uncle were then deported to the camp in Arizona.
- Sleeper: So your aunt and uncle went with you to Tule Lake?
- Baldwin: No. Our families didn't stay together. We were sent to different places. They separated us. My family was sent to Tule Lake. My Aunt and Uncle went out to Arizona, and we headed up to Tule Lake.
- Sleeper: How did you get there, by bus? In a group?
- Baldwin: I don't remember those details.
- Sleeper: When you arrived, what do you remember about Tule Lake?
- Baldwin: I do remember, being small myself, there were many identical barracks, rows of them, all same, all black. I wasn't fully aware of my surroundings. I couldn't read numbers, and it was easy to get lost.
- Sleeper: What did the place look like? Were there trees and mountains?
- Baldwin: It was a long flat stretch of land, bordered on all sides by a fence with guards looking over us, protecting us. I wandered around, alone, not understanding fully my surroundings. I do recall one time a guard was trying to call my attention, not knowing I was Deaf. A lady who knew me told the guard, "She is deaf." I went on about my business, and he eventually ignored me.

- Sleeper: How long did you stay in Tule Lake?
- Baldwin: A short time, not sure how long it was. I think I have seen documents for one year, but I really don't remember. Maybe less than one year.
- Sleeper: What about the weather, climate and surroundings?
- Baldwin: I recall we had nice weather there. It was a big camp, and I stayed close to my family.
- Sleeper: So, how did your parents communicate with you and others in Tule Lake?
- Baldwin: They would notify me when it was time to eat, using gestures. My aunt and uncle were sent off to another place, so we were pretty much alone. As a Deaf family we stayed together, and I recall a sense that we were quite helpless. I guess.
- Baldwin: After our short time in Tule Lake, we were transferred to another camp in Jerome, Arkansas. We were sent there by the Army and went on train. I recall that we were all excited about traveling on a train. My mother was pregnant with my younger brother. I remember running up and down the aisle on the train with my siblings and arriving at Jerome after a long train ride.
- Sleeper: How long did you stay at the camp in Jerome?
- Baldwin: Jerome [referring to some document] was the town where my brother was born.
- Sleeper: Jerome, Arkansas? Your brother was born at the camp?
- Baldwin: My brother—yes, in Jerome.
- Sleeper: Why were you sent to Jerome?
- Baldwin: I don't know. We didn't stay there long, and were later sent to Rohwer, the last camp we stayed in until the end of World War II.
- Sleeper: You stayed in Jerome for a short time? Do you remember if Rohwer was longer?
- Baldwin: I don't remember. I think both were the same duration, but I don't remember precisely.
- Sleeper: What were Jerome and Rohwer like?

- Baldwin: In comparison, for example, at Tule Lake, there were rows and rows of barracks spread out. Jerome was smaller, and there were steps up into buildings. The place we stayed in had a hallway, a kitchen and a bathroom.
- Sleeper: Tell me more about Rohwer.
- Baldwin: It was nice. I had schooling for the first time while staying in the camps, but only for short time. The teacher was a white man. My mother heard about school for the Deaf in Little Rock, Arkansas. She made inquiries with the Army officer to look into it and see if I could leave the camp to go. However, the School wouldn't accept me, and I recall my mother was really disappointed. She believed in education. So, we went about playing with hearing peers, but their parents didn't approve this, us being Deaf. We were extremely lonely, all to ourselves, doing things on our own, playing games. We were really lonely.
- Sleeper: How were the accommodations at Rohwer? Was your barrack room crowded? Did it have creature comforts like beds, curtains, chairs?
- Baldwin: It was quite comfortable, spacious, not crowded at all. I don't remember much more, but there were stoves to keep us warm in winter. We were comfortable.
- Sleeper: While there in Rohwer, what were you parents doing every day? Did they work while at the camp?
- Baldwin: Well, my mother basically stayed in the barracks and tended to us. My father had been allowed to leave to make boxes with his brother, my uncle, in Ohio.
- Sleeper: Ohio?
- Baldwin: Yes, in Ohio, at a factory.
- Sleeper: You mean your father wasn't with you there?
- Baldwin: No.
- Sleeper: So, at Rohwer, it was just you and your mother, brothers and sisters?
- Baldwin: My mother and my family, yes.
- Sleeper: Your father first was with you at Tule Lake, then went to Ohio?
- Baldwin: No. We first we traveled to Arkansas. I don't remember how long it was before he went to Ohio. All I know is that he was allowed to leave to make boxes in a factory with his brother, my uncle, in Ohio. When the war ended we all went back to California together.

- Sleeper: So, your mom was at the camp looking after you. Did she work there?
- Baldwin: She stayed home and did not work.
- Sleeper: What about eating and mingling with people?
- Baldwin: We would go out of the barrack to eat at the mess hall. They would alert us using gestures when it was time for meals. They were nice, but we were disappointed because we could not play with their hearing kids. Otherwise, everyone was kind and respectful.
- Sleeper: You said you aunt and uncle were sent to Arizona. But your grandparents, where were they?
- Baldwin: I think they were gone, grandparents both were dead.
- Sleeper: Gone before the camp?
- Baldwin: Yes, before the camp.
- Sleeper: Had they died before the bombing?
- Baldwin: Yes, I think so.
- Sleeper: Both sides of grandparents?
- Baldwin: Yes, both of them.
- Sleeper: Your mom managed to communicate with camp officers through writing or using gestures?
- Baldwin: My mother was usually quiet, doing some reading and writing, would write to others to communicate as needed. Mostly, she just stayed home or would go for walks.
- Sleeper: You said you were lonely there, that experience, negative emotional experience? Good or bad?
- Baldwin: As a kid I was disappointed because I really wanted to play. We did some wandering around though.
- Sleeper: How about your mom, her feelings?
- Baldwin: I could see Mom was disappointed and sad, but said she couldn't do anything about it. She kept silent.
- Sleeper: Oh, she felt suppressed, bottled in?

- Baldwin: I really don't know.
- Sleeper: Regarding loyalty, you are a Japanese American born in the United States. You grew up here, right?
- Baldwin: Yes. My mother was born here in California. She fully supported the US and was innocent of any wrongdoing. Nothing could prove otherwise.
- Sleeper: Your mom signed a loyalty oath to support America, not Japan?
- Baldwin: I don't know. She had no schooling and, even though she could read and write. I doubt she was ever asked by the authorities to sign anything, because she was Deaf.
- Sleeper: At the camp, the children there were taught about citizenship and academic subjects. Did you and your siblings learn at a school at the camp?
- Baldwin: No. we stayed home and had no access to school.
- Sleeper: When the war ended, did your mom and your family leave Arkansas to return to California?
- Baldwin: Yes. We returned to San Jose, California
- Sleeper: Do you recall what your feelings were to get out of the camp?
- Baldwin: I was excited about going to School for the Deaf in Berkeley.
- Sleeper: How old were you?
- Baldwin: I was ten years old and truly excited. Both my parents drove me there. But I faced big confrontations with the students. At first, I was all excited wanting to learn, but kids said I was real bad person. Insults were thrown at me. They brushed me away. I was stunned and was livid. I was involved in a fight with two girls. I twisted one girl's arm, wrapped around neck. I was sent to the office. Miss Turner understood what was going on; she knew about me and my two deaf sisters. I was totally innocent and had no idea what their anger was all about. Miss Turner reprimanded these girls and forced them to offer me apologies. Thereafter we became good friends, and things were fine thereafter.
- Sleeper: What about your brother and sisters? What were their feelings about going back to school? Did people mock them as well?
- Baldwin: I have no idea. My two sisters were smart and, before being sent to the camps, they had been doing well in school. When they returned after we left the camp they couldn't get back into learning anymore. It was as if their minds were in

shock, and they couldn't stay focused on learning and felt limited. The school was disappointed in them; they were forced to repeat grades. They stayed for three years and were finally given certificates upon graduation. Both were disappointed by their struggle in school.

- Sleeper: When you arrived back in San Jose, did you go back to your farmhouse after the war?
- Baldwin: I remembered going back to our old house, and I didn't like how it looked. It appeared poorly maintained and run-down.
- Sleeper: Run-down?
- Baldwin: Yes. There wasn't an indoor bathroom, only outside, and I didn't like the area. I asked my parents about it, as I wanted a nicer home. They wanted to move to better housing in Japantown in San Jose. However, whenever people there heard about us they shooed us away, because of our deafness.
- Sleeper: Because you were Deaf, you were rejected for housing?
- Baldwin: Yes, because we were Deaf. My parents felt very hurt. We eventually ended up at a house elsewhere but that experience left me wondering about the Japanese view of us.
- Sleeper: Your father, brother, uncle left Ohio arrived here and met your mother back here?
- Baldwin: The whole family came back together once we were allowed to leave the camps. My aunt and uncle went to live in San Mateo. My other aunt, however, remained in Ohio, but they were not close.
- Sleeper: When your family all got together, how did they feel toward each other? Were they happy to see each other after being separated at different places? Was it an emotional occasion with lots of hugs?
- Baldwin: No. Japanese at that time did not believe in demonstrations of affection, only through spoken words. They reacted negatively when hugged, and some may have allowed it later on. But generally, it wasn't seen within Japanese culture that I grew up in.
- Sleeper: But you were happy to see each other?
- Baldwin: My immediate family was close to one another but not with my aunt and uncle.
- Sleeper: Were your parents happy to see old friends, Deaf friends, and socialize with them?

- Baldwin: My mother wasn't, but my father was glad to be with his friends again. I do recall exchanges of hugs as they had been worried about him.
- Sleeper: What about your father's car? Did he get it back?
- Baldwin: My father was so excited to go retrieve his car, but he was told that it had been destroyed in a fire. Much later, however, he learned that the car was actually sold for Army uses, for \$100. My father held his anger and disappointment to himself, and he didn't say anything more about it thereafter.
- Sleeper: So you never got anything back? Did you have to buy everything new, basically starting from scratch a new life in San Jose?
- Baldwin: Yes. We stayed in the same house that we had moved to until my two older sisters graduated and moved out. Then the State evicted us to build a freeway on that property. With little money in hand, my parents bought a mobile home on the outskirts of San Jose. They remained there until my father died. Then I took Mom in to live with me.
- Sleeper: What was your reaction to the Civil Liberties Act generally and in regard to reparations for all your losses? What are your thoughts about that?
- Baldwin: I didn't have much that I personally lost, but I felt great empathy for those who owned valuable farmland. They must have felt bitterly disappointed with \$20,000 compensation.
- Sleeper: What do you think in general about the Act?
- Baldwin: Certainly, my family accepted the money. We used it to attend a friend's wedding in Hawaii [chuckles]. My son's wife and her family accompanied us and helped to spend it.
- Sleeper: What you think of the fact that the National Park Service has saved many of the camps as historic sites. The buildings at Rohwer have now become a museum. What do you think of that?
- Baldwin: I don't know what is still there. I don't know as I haven't heard anything more specific. I guess I don't want to know. I do know about the efforts to save Tule Lake, but I'm not sure about Rohwer. I always felt bitter about us not being able to play with other children at Rohwer. Later, when I was older, I learned that in Japan Deaf people are also looked down upon. Japanese Americans also treated us poorly but once the war was over, after three to four years, things got better.
- Sleeper: So, you haven't ever been back to any of the camps?
- Baldwin: No. It's too sad. Sad.

- Sleeper: Do you have any more stories about your experiences at the camps?
- Baldwin: I'd like to share one funny story when I was at Tule Lake. I was young and couldn't read numbers. This was an enormous camp. Along the many rows of long barracks, there were bathrooms and showers in the back. One night, very late, I went to use the bathroom. On my return I got lost. I could not find my barrack, and I wasn't able to read numbers. I poked in some doors and was shooed away. Eventually, after walking around aimlessly, I finally saw my mother stood out waving her arms to get my attention. Because my dad didn't want this to happen again, he placed a big USA flag on the roof, a USA flag! Of all the things he could have chosen instead. He wanted to make sure I'd find my way when I saw it. Looking back on it there are many ironies about that. I couldn't see it at nighttime. And there I was locked up inside an internment camp.
- Sleeper: Did the guards have lights above in their guard posts?
- Baldwin: There were dim lampposts around, but I still couldn't see the flag on the roof. I remember that I was not able to find that barrack because I couldn't read numbers. I sure was happy to enroll in school to get an education!
- Sleeper: Can you tell us about your life at the school in Berkeley.
- Baldwin: Yes, I graduated from the School for the Deaf in Berkeley in 1956, and went to Gallaudet College and graduated in 1961. I majored in Home Economics but never had a job. I soon got married the summer after my graduation. After my marriage I worked some odd jobs doing gift wrapping but was mainly a housewife. I never had the opportunity to become a teacher, and I always regretted not having taught.
- Sleeper: Can you talk more in depth about your high school years? Did you meet a lot more Deaf Japanese at Berkeley or at Gallaudet? Or out in Deaf community? Did they share same experiences you had?
- Baldwin: At that time, I really didn't know much. After graduation from College, I did some reading to find out more about it, reading the history of the internment. My mouth just dropped. It finally occurred to me what had been happening. No one talked about it in school. Teachers wouldn't talk about it in my classes. They wouldn't and didn't discuss the persecution we endured. They never spoke about it when I went to Gallaudet.
- Sleeper: Did you learn American Sign Language at the School for the Deaf in Berkeley?
- Baldwin: My two sisters communicated through gestures. Not fluently.

- Sleeper: When you entered Gallaudet, you met Deaf Japanese there? Or was it just you?
- Baldwin: Not many, just me and my brother, just five of us, Japanese.
- Sleeper: Were they all Japanese Americans?
- Baldwin: Yes, all were Japanese Americans.
- Sleeper: Did you talk to them about their camp experience?
- Baldwin: They wouldn't talk about it. They were bitter. Yes—they were bitter, and kept quiet about it. Remember my own family all were Deaf. All of the other students came from hearing families and were the only ones who were deaf in their family. I am sure it was more isolating for them at the camps than it was for us.
- Sleeper: Did your mom have difficulties communicating with camp officers? How did she communicate? Mostly through writing?
- Baldwin: Mother did communicate in writing, as they wouldn't learn to use sign language with us. We communicated through writing, or using finger writing in the air.
- Sleeper: You mean writing in Japanese? Or English?
- Baldwin: No, we only wrote in American English but mainly the same way you would write in the air with your finger pointing. You see, my mother wouldn't learn sign language. It wasn't until we were attending church run by a Japanese minister at the camp. Mother would write things down during church activities. The minister noticed us, and he inquired why she only communicated in writing and asked her about using sign language, since she had four deaf children.
- Sleeper: So you, your brother and older sisters communicated with each other in fluent ASL, but not your mom?
- Baldwin: She was afraid of making mistakes with words, especially with sign language, where the words often have several meanings. She eventually learned some ASL but was never fluent. She did fingerspelling and signed in simple short phrases. She couldn't do it at a rapid speed. She would sign very slowly, word by word.
- Sleeper: Thank you for sharing your experience.

- Baldwin: Mother would chat with us, but not father. When he did not understand something we children would translate for him using gestures and mime. He was also not fluent and understood basic signing, but only simple signs.
- Sleeper: What about those two words: Concentration & Relocation? Any difference? Or the same meaning to you?
- Baldwin: Both mean the same to me.
- Sleeper: Did you ever talk about your experiences to younger people, the younger generation?
- Baldwin: In recent past, the School for the Deaf [now] in Fremont called me to speak there. The students and staff pondered over what I said. A second group I spoke to was also Deaf students. This interview is only the third time I have spoken about my experiences.
- Sleeper: I see that Ron Hirano has spoken quite often?
- Baldwin: Yes, he has, but Ron Hirano was very lucky.
- Sleeper: Lucky?
- Baldwin: His family had a good friend, a white woman by the name of Miss Rice, who his mother arranged with to look after him. They arranged for him to stay as a boarder at the School for the Deaf under her sponsorship. His whole family was sent to Arizona, but he stayed at the School for the Deaf in Berkeley. Every so often Ron was able to visit his family in Arizona. I didn't go to school until after the war ended. We met up with Ron in Berkeley.
- Sleeper: You knew Ron from school, or—
- Baldwin: No, he was at the school before me.
- Sleeper: So you knew him before going to the camps, right?
- Baldwin: I met him later on after the war.
- Sleeper: Oh, you met Ron only after you went to school?
- Baldwin: We hooked up there. He was never sent to camp; he was lucky.
- Sleeper: I suppose he missed his parents?
- Baldwin: Well, he did share his suffering at those times when peers putting him down insulted him. He went through a lot of name-calling in school. He had many bold insults from peers and strangers alike. It was interesting to learn from

him what his experiences had been when he told me that. He was in constant ridicule by peers, but as time passed things turned out fine. He was innocent and naïve like me.

Sleeper: I understand because it wasn't his fault.

Sleeper: We're curious about the medical facilities at the camp. Do you remember your mother giving birth to your brother, the youngest one, at the camp? Remember anything about that?

Baldwin: When I was little I was excited when my brother was born, but mother wouldn't allow me to hold him. I only was able to look at him, and he was kept in his own room at the barrack. Honestly, I don't remember much of anything about the hospital though.

Sleeper: So you don't remember mother giving birth in hospital?

Baldwin: No, I didn't know. I wasn't there at the hospital when he was born. I only noted him. A small child appeared one day.

Sleeper: So, you don't remember the hospital at all?

Baldwin: No, I don't remember Mom being sick, or any of us going off to the hospital. I don't remember.

Sleeper: So you don't remember mother giving birth in hospital, but do you have any memories about the mess hall?

Baldwin: The food was very good. I do remember [laughs] rice; they had great rice. I can't really remember any details. We ate there every day and had regular meals at regular times every day. There was a Japanese chef. They served the same thing to everyone. That's all I remember.

Sleeper: Were the conditions at the camps poorly maintained?

Baldwin: No, it was all clean. Everything was clean, including the bathrooms.

Sleeper: So, did your family stay together in one barracks? How did that work?

Baldwin: Yes, every family stayed together in a small group, in each barrack unit during the three-year internment.

Sleeper: It appears the Japanese internees did the farming for food?

Baldwin: I don't know.

Sleeper: Can you talk about your family after you got married?

- Baldwin: I got married and had one son, Ted, who is sitting over there behind the camera. Just one. My oldest sister married and had two hearing children. My other sister got married and had one hearing daughter. My older brother has three kids, who are hard of hearing/Deaf. My youngest brother never got married. In his last job, he worked for doing graphic work. He was let go and then worked for company until he retired after thirty-one years working. He had moved to Orlando, Florida, but I never understood why he moved out there with all his family still here in California. He passed away recently, December 23, 2012. All of my siblings are now dead. I am the last one left.
- Sleeper: So everyone in your family is now passed away except you?
- Baldwin: Yes. First, it was my father who died in 1970, then my mother in 1999, my oldest brother in 2000, my sisters died 2000, and my youngest brother in 2012.
- Sleeper: So, both your sisters died in the same year?
- Baldwin: Yes, the two died in 2000 and the last sibling, my brother, in 2012.
- Sleeper: How do you feel about that period of your life as you look back over the years? Do you feel bitter about it?
- Baldwin: I do feel sad when contemplating/wondering about this all. When I was young I wasn't aware of differences in race or about racism. I thought we all were alike. I thought we all were one nation, one color, equal. Though there were different people I didn't really think of them as being different. I have been giving it some thought, and I had some bitter feelings, it has bothered me, but I went on and accepted things. Life goes on.
- Baldwin: Deaf people did fine those years but not Japanese people.
- Sleeper: How did *you* feel when you got money? What year did you get that?
- Baldwin: Everyone in my family got theirs payment. My mother got it too, all of us except Dad.
- Sleeper: Oh, your dad didn't?
- Baldwin: No. He had died in 1970 before that happened.
- Sleeper: How did your mother feel about that?
- Baldwin: She took the money with no strong feelings. Not too happy though.

- Sleeper: What do you think about the general Civil Rights Movement, did that bring more equality for everyone instead of being attacked and mistreated, especially towards Japanese?
- Baldwin: Things did get better, all more equal, and better.
- Sleeper: Have people been interested in your experience?
- Baldwin: Some were surprised, and some weren't aware of it. They were surprised learning about it. Hearing white people only noticed us as being Deaf.
- Sleeper: Did you go to the Deaf community and meet or socialize with other Deaf Asians a lot, in group meetings or occasions?
- Baldwin: Looking back, I did go to the local Deaf Community Center, and there was an *Asian* group—Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans—but all the different groups usually shared their problems related to being Deaf, which was common to many of us.
- Sleeper: So people from Hong Kong, China or Korea, they all said the same thing?
- Baldwin: Yes. We were always looked down on for being Deaf. Hearing people always gave us the brush-off and a condescending attitude.
- Sleeper: Mostly condescending, looking down?
- Baldwin: All of them suffered with this problem. Things have improved here and abroad. Asian cultures in other countries have improved their views toward the Deaf. Now, the Deaf can go to better schools and get work.
- Sleeper: So people from Hong Kong, China or Korea, they all said the same thing about putting up with discriminatory practices?
- Baldwin: When I was growing up, I strongly identified with Americans and had many wonderful attachments to white hearing families. When Asians moved to America, they were the ones with the most negative attitude toward us. And there were general frictions between hearing Japanese and Chinese.
- Sleeper: Did you work with other Deaf Asians?
- Baldwin: I had remarried and started working for the US Post Office. While working at the US Post Office in San Francisco, hearing people were always checking on us, but we showed them we were good workers, often better than them. Deaf and Hearing worked side by side. The Deaf employees would congregate at lunch or on breaks and chat together.
- Sleeper: I am familiar with that in my own work experience.

Baldwin: You know, some Deaf don't have good English skills and have trouble communicating with hearing people. Well-educated Deaf people do much better. But for those with English difficulties they do experience more frustration and often tend to depend on others for help. They still do have communication problems, those who are poorly educated, and face many frustrations.

[End of interview]