

Voices from the Past

How the Blind of Eastern Idaho See the
Experience of Life

By Tommy Miyasaki

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Tape #144

Oral interview conducted by Harold Forbush

Transcribed by Maren Miyasaki January 2005

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Harold Forbush: Today being the thirteenth of December 1980 I have the opportunity of coming to the home of Tom Miyasaki here at Sugar City Idaho that I might interview him pertaining to the general topic and subject of how the blind of Eastern Idaho see the experience of life. Tom lets start this interview off with some rather simple questions, background questions. Indicate your full name and your present address?

Tommy Miyasaki: My full name is Hisatomi Miyasaki. I'm commonly known as Tommy Miyasaki for this, for convenience for the public. I, I live in Sugar City; the address is North Teton, 225 North Teton in Sugar City, Idaho.

HF: State the date and the place of your birth.

TM: I was born in Rexburg, Idaho November 30, 1918.

HF: And what is your present occupation?

TM: My present occupation is a High School guidance counselor at Sugar/Salem High School.

HF: Okay. What back, how many years have you lived in Idaho?

TM: I lived most of my life in Idaho, born in Rexburg, and the only time I was away from this area is during the brief period of my involvement in the service and my educational experience at the colleges in Utah.

HF: I see. Has counseling been your major occupation and livelihood?

TM: It has been for the last ten years, prior to that I was in the poultry business.

HF: Why don't you just enumerate, a, a rather extensively this areas of your occupation because I probably won't be talking any further other than to get into some depth about your counseling, but, a—

TM: Subsequent to my graduation from Utah State in agriculture I moved into this area with the specific, the idea of going into the dairy business. However, at that moment, it was in 1949 and the price of dairy heifers was so high, I felt like it was almost just about all, almost impossible to get into it without an exorbitant amount of capital, so the next choice was, which I probably had just as much knowledge of in the academic area was in the poultry business, I had just about had a degree in poultry, so I ventured into the poultry business with a thousand chicks. And, naturally what the books say and what your actual experience involvement is two different things. I got involved in some, some of the disease areas the chicks will undergo the first year of my experience in the poultry business, and I think I just hogged about 800 mature hens out of the thousand my first year. And then from there, within the next ten years it was more or less a development process of trying to develop my business to the extent that it would be a source of income for me and my family and by the end of ten years I had a fifteen

thousand hen unit operating, which means approximately, a, taking care of a ten thousand eggs a day, washing them, and grading, and packaging. It looks like most of my part of the, a work in the business was feeding, grading, and washing the eggs and also helping with the packaging of it while my wife took care of the grading and the, and the running of the sorter. So, a, and then she also marketed most of the eggs while I done all the homework.

HF: Were those... were your eggs marketed locally pretty much?

TM: Yes, they, they were marketed from Idaho Falls to West Yellowstone that was more or less the areas that I covered and a—

HF: Did Haroldson have his egg farm here in Madison County at the time?

TM: He did at the latter part, not at the beginning.

HF: You were... you didn't have a lot of competition then maybe at first.

TM: Well, I think in the, in that period of time there were a lot of small poultry men through out the area, a thousand, two thousand hen units. All the farms, a lot of the farmers had those, had that kind of units. I would say about ten or fifteen poultry men were in the area, but as the prices were such that they eliminated a lot of these poultry men that were not in full time poultry business, they found there was no profit in it. The only way that you could probably receive some remuneration for your efforts was, was a, a, those that were in full time, recognizing the need for looking in all directions as to efficiency, getting the most production with the least amount of expenses.

HF: At the time that you were in the poultry business, doing so for the purpose of production of eggs and I suppose as a side also selling the older hens for meat purposes, etc. that, that would be true, wouldn't it?

TM: Yes, uh-huh. We usually see if we can get the hens to produce at least eighteen to twenty months of good laying. And in, in order to do that we had to do we had to go through what we called ten months of good laying probably, and then two or three months of molting period, and then, another addition of eight to ten month of good laying, the reason the molting period is needed is to give the hens a rest, so that the quality of the shell as well as the interior quality of the eggs will be up to par as it should be. If you don't do that naturally, the, as the machine of the hen goes a long it seems like their efficiency drops as they get a little older and it's kind of a rejuvenation period during that molting period so they can give us another good eight to ten months of good egg production. Ah, it would be interesting, it was a choice experience for me in the process of growing, that, a, of extending my business was that I was involved in the building of the build, of the houses all the mechanical equipment and that. It just gave me a choice experience of a hand on experience you might say of knowing how to operate a poultry farm, just to experience it by word of mouth is so much different than actually getting involved in it.

HF: I can tell you this Tom, that your, your fame spread from Sugar City extended to Driggs on the east, I know of that personally. People from the valley would go down and come down to get their eggs and they were always telling me about that Japanese blind man who did his own building, his own egg production, what a fabulous individual he was and I suppose ah, people from the Idaho Falls area got to know you and up north Island Park, West Yellowstone, and maybe out as far as Arco. How bout that? Make some comments about that.

TM: Yes, I think it isn't as to what I've done, but probably the kind of product we was selling. We wanted to take care of our eggs and the kind of eggs we wanted to put on the breakfast table and so we were concerned, and quite keenly, with the quality of the product that we sold and naturally after the word of mouth the kind of egg that was sold we, we just couldn't meet all the orders. A lot of times we had to buy cases and cases of eggs to meet the orders that we needed to fill. I found out when you buy eggs from other people then you run into the problem of quality so that's the reason we, year after year we continually increased our operations to meet the demands of our eggs.

HF: Now, eventually you determined to, to cease your operation. What was this and what did you then decide to do?

TM: It was in 1969 by that time most of my home help, I had two boys and a daughter that were growing during that period in time naturally we tried to operate our business within the family. I think I had some extra help in seasonal times when, when the cleaning of the pens were necessary, when new chicks were brought in, ah, during this moment of, period of time when there was some need for extra help, I called in some extra help, but other than that our family more or less operated the business. Well, about 1969 most of my children are moving, are moving out of the home and going into the college area for further education, I found myself doing the work, work, doing the work and to hire the work wasn't quite as intentioned as I, I felt as it was so, and all the equipment I'd purchased were getting antiquated. If I was going to continue I was probably have to, to replace all the equipment and if I replaced all them I wanted to go fully automatic and that required maybe a 200, \$200, 000 investment and if your children had no desire of coming back and taking over the business I felt this was a good time to terminate it. And naturally I had a kind of a deep seated feeling of going into something else I found during that period of twenty years working in the Church and my interest with the youth, ah, increased to the extent I felt like I wanted to go into some kind of a field where I could work with the youth and naturally the counseling field, ah, was the top, quite seriously. So I closed the door in 1969 just waiting for the hens to lay out and my one boy that was a senior in High School, my wife decided to stay here while I went to BYU to get my master's degree in counseling and guidance.

HF: What was your first job post graduation?

TM: My post graduation after receiving my degree from BYU as a counselor guidance field I came back into this area feeling that this is where I would like to establish, hoping

that there probably there may be a chance of getting into the Ricks College, um, with a, with a masters degree in counseling guidance and a minor in religion. That was my initial desire to get into Ricks, but at that moment in time Ricks was at a point, um, where there was not too many students, but the faculty was still there and there was an abundance of faculty members and the, it was more or less kind of a, you might say a, a change at Rick's College of trying to increase their enrollment and so my chances of getting in there were very slim. So I scouted around and entered the Services Center and they hired me immediately as a case worker to one of the cottages, after about two or three months of work there, ah, they felt like that I could do the job adequately and they gave me the hardest cottage in the center and that was to work with the, the girls.

HF: Describe, describe the, the Services Center for us, let's see in that time it was referred to as, was it Youth's Services or was it...?

TM: As I remember it was still Youth Services prior to that it was identified as Industrial School.

HF: Uh-huh, alright share with me what this institution is and why it, why it functions, and what purposes it fulfills?

TM: The purpose of the Youth Services Center was to more or less house those individuals from the age of eight to eighteen that found some difficulty in, in responding with their behavioral that was not conducive to the community, in other words they were getting to the point where they were no longer an asset to community, a liability, and they were brought before the court and labeled as adjudicated delinquents. And these were the persons that were brought into the institution, hopefully that through our program they can see the necessity of changing their behavior that will be acceptable to the community and as, as reliable and good citizens.

HF: The inmates were from all over the state, were they not?

TM: Yes, they were from all over.

HF: Boys and girls?

TM: Boys and girls, and usually the ratio ran, the ratio of boys and girls was about, oh one to four. In other words there were about, maybe less than that we might have twenty to twenty-five girls to hundred and twenty to a hundred and forty boys. So, ah naturally the girls were harder to work with because they did not send them to, to the institution unless they were just almost impossible to handle in the community, in other words they were hard, hard core delinquents when they were brought into the institution and for that reason they required a lot of understanding, a lot of counseling with the young people in order make them understand as to what is right and what is wrong. It's interesting to note that most of the philosophy of those young people over there is something like this: nothing is wrong unless you, unless you are caught and told that it is wrong. See they

had no basic philosophy when something is wrong you should recognize at that point in time that it is wrong, but they don't think it is wrong until you are caught see.

HF: And told.

TM: And told, uh-huh.

HF: What were your experiences over there, ah, as a blind counselor. Did you think, feel that you were effective working with those hard core delinquents as you refer to them?

TM: Know I had some real overwhelming, overwhelming anxieties about the thing because you know the first thing you know you're working with individuals that are, that are dangerous, they may physically injure you, these kind of things were at the back of my mind, but I thought, "well, the only way to find out is to get involved," and I think during my experience there I found out that, ah, probably because I think that I couldn't see those individuals. It gave me an advantage at how to approach those youngsters. One of the experiences that I had was when one of the supervisors brought a young fellow in that just brought into the institution, and he says, "Boy you've got a real hard core delinquent that's dangerous. He has been, he has murdered individuals on the outside, physically big and strong, don't you think you need someone there while you're counseling?" "Well," I says, "I'll take that chance." Because of the observable behavior and physical characteristics of the, of the individual and some of the labeling that was associated with this fellow, this supervisor with his physical vision had observed all the hardcore-ness of the, of the fellow. Well, I couldn't see that and as I sat down and talked with this fellow you know I got the feeling of what he was really was in his heart was a meek, very frightened child that had come into the institution realizing that he was coming to a place that there was a lot of hardcore youngsters that was really going to beat him up every chance he got. So he wanted to develop an image that he was a tough guy you see, and naturally he effectively done that because it had convinced the supervisors that he was, he was an individual. And yet here was a fellow that, yes he was physically well built, but he was truly he was someone who was afraid, really afraid of coming into the institution. Naturally, with that kind of an input I felt good you know that sometimes the, the physical vision gives prejudgment that are not right of a youngster and another thing that I felt within me is each one of these kids are still human individuals with sensitivity, just like anybody else. For example, for example I was going from my cottage to the, to the, to another building on campus, and I knew the way very well, but there was a youngster who was across the quad says, "Hey Mister Miyasaki, do you want me to help you get to the, get to the place that you want to go?" I could have easier said, "I can find my way." But I says, "Sure, come along help me," and you know I thought to myself, "Here are these kids that are labeled delinquents yet deep in their heart they still have the, the spirit of service, of helping someone, and I didn't want to deny this fellow of this experience and I got next to him and I think it was a choice experience that I able to work with him and finally he got out of the institution and done really well. And I think these little choice experiences that, put you, probably because you do not have the physical vision you got to rely on alternative measures, naturally rely on sensitivity of the

individual as we talk with him as we rub shoulders with him, these are the things that we are I'm keenly aware of and I think are widely important in my counseling experience.

HF: I think that is a very that's a very excellent evaluation Tom. Now your present occupation is counseling at the Sugar/Salem High School. You're dealing, I am assuming with this time highly motivated youngsters, youngsters who are in school and they're certainly not classed as delinquent. What's your approach, do you find challenge in this new area?

TM: Yes, I find challenge in this area, but it's of a little of, of a little of a different nature. Ah, the ones at the Youth Services Center were very much behavioral oriented, discipline of their behavior, whether it's acceptable to people, to their peers, to the community, or to whomever they are around in their environment. The kind of challenges that were brought before me in a High School environment is something that is related naturally to academics, vocational counseling, career counseling, what shall I do after I leave High School, how am I progressing during, during the academic period in High School. Some are very highly motivated, some are not so, so with these kinds of, of experiences well, it was entirely different from that of the Youth Services Center and I found it challenging to the extent that I need to be pretty well versed on the kinds of educational opportunities that are outside of the High School area, I need to be pretty well versed of the vocational opportunities, ah, helping the individuals to decide during their High School experience as to what kind of careers they would like to get into. I think it's very interesting in that the, naturally this involved a lot of parent material of getting information through this source of media and I found that the, the, the modern technology providing a lot of this instruction through tapes, recordings, and Braille facilitated my experience of doing an effective job in the High School.

HF: Now in that connection as a blind counselor, ah, ah, you require your knowledge differently than a sighted person, it, to the extent that he would read from a magazine or from a textbook you listen to a tape or a talking book machine, is that correct?

TM: Uh-hem.

HF: Is that correct?

TM: Right. Uh-huh.

HF: Are there other areas wherein your methodology or your way of performing your, your duties may be different from maybe what a sighted person would be doing?

TM: Yes it would because it seems like I had to comply with the normal media oh of the youth of eyesight in gaining, gaining, receiving information, and inseminating information. Therefore, for my own use all my files had to be typewritten in Braille and to disseminate the message, the, the material that is in my files I had to type it out, so the, so that the principals and the teachers involved in the environment could, could understand or at least receive what I wanted to say. So I think the, the counseling as a

blind individual requires probably a double duty. What takes a normal person just one sheet of message to a blind individual you have to have a printed copy as well as a Braille.

HF: You'd have double filing with each case?

TM: Well, what I'd do is usually is staple the printed copy with the Braille copy together see.

HF: I see, put in one file.

TM: Yes, put in one file.

HF: Jane Doe comes in wants to get some information on vocational opportunities. You would sit her down and ah, will say take her name, address, her school status, etc. all in Braille. Yes, would you do—?

TM: Yes, uh-huh.

HF: Then, then of course that had to be all duplicated all in print.

TM: In print right, uh-hum, yeah. And for example you know when I would run them through a standardized test, ah, as the results come in I have to file them in each individual file. I have the, the reader or the aid that I have there read all the scores in the tape recorder and then I'd make Braille copies of it you know during my spare time see to file in the student. So when a student comes in and say, say I'm interested in this type of vocation well, naturally I'd have probably a, some test information as to, as to aptitude test. I have, a, a test material as to her interest. I'd have test material indicating her, her mental ability so in order to, to give the kinds of information that are necessary I need to have at my fingertips all these kinds of information and as I pull her file well, I'd, I'd produce the Braille material. I only use my, ah my index finger on my left hand for reading Braille. That's the only one I've educated at the present time.

HF: That's interesting. We have something in common old buddy.

TM: I've heard of some individuals that educating all four fingers on both sides see and doing an effective job of reading, but, ah, I haven't done yet. When, when this finger goes out I might. And then that way I can give the kinds of information that is necessary says it seems like your, your aptitude test indicates that you are mechanically minded you know and then, and then your interest area also shows that you like to tinker around on mechanical things and your mental ability is at such a stage that you can very easily get involved with this kind of a business so probably we need to look at career areas, which are associated with mechanic, see. And that, in order to do that effectively you need to have at your finger tips these kinds of information and that's why it's so necessary for to have all these printed test materials, all of their historical background in Braille so I can make these kind of judgments and, and accurate judgments available to, to the student.

HF: Are you retained, by the school district throughout the twelve months or just during the, a school period?

TM: I always retained during the school period only that I have to start two weeks prior to the, to the beginning, and two weeks after school to more or less, ah, oh, prior to the school it's more to preparing for registration. I need to give the necessary information to the front office in reference to the Principal as they got through registration what the classes necessary, needed for each student in reference to keeping up with their academic status so that they'll, they'll meet the graduation requirement during, at the end of their senior year see. And a, so all these information are made into print material to the principal so they can just flip over and see what each student needs you know in order, in order to graduate. And especially on the junior year, I call in the student and the parent of every student in the junior class and explain to them as to where their standing is academically and what they need to take in their senior year to graduate because we had so many experiences prior to that of students saying at the maybe four weeks before graduation realizing that they were only about a half a unit short for graduating. And the parents saying, "If I had known that I would of done something" and the students saying, "I wasn't aware of that see." So in their junior year we really go through their academic standing with each student so there'd be no problems.

HF: Tom, as a blind counselor with these various duties you've explained, are their strengths that you feel you have in this capacity and in the same token on the opposite side of the coin perhaps are there some weaknesses that, ah, maybe suggest themselves?

TM: Yes there is, first I think the strength of it is that I don't think I have the a, the a ability of making prejudgment of a student coming into my office. If the individual is, a, field clad, very sloppy, long hairdo, and all those things that are associated with delinquency probably if I had the vision I'd make prejudgment, "Uh oh here is a problem child." Yet when you get to talk to him it is entirely different from what you probably prejudged, and so I think I have, a, a strength in the fact that I don't make those kind of prejudgments accept the individual as he starts conversing with me and then we can find out those areas that are more significant than the physical feature of the individual, see and sometimes we do make assessments that are wrong. Areas which I feel like that are weak is in my interviews probably I miss all the body language that maybe, a, a, disseminated from the student as we counsel. But usually I can pick those up by their voice inflection, by the way they squirm around in their chair, a kicking their feet this way or that way. Gives me kind of a message saying that say this student is very nervous, something is bothering him, but there is one area that I don't get as keenly as sighted counselor would is the body language that they might send.

HF: Has there ever been a disciplinary problem arising in your presence?

TM: Yes, into the effect its more or less of a pun or something, but some of the students will try and leave the office without me noticing before my interview is through as it becomes a very uncomfortable, but yet I can even feel that, you know as they rise up and

move that I can pick them up. But I don't, I think I could handle it a lot better if I had physical vision that I'd have to call them back, you know call them down and say, "Let's sit down let's work this thing over before we're through." Naturally, they may come in and it's very difficult for me to assume whether there's two individuals or one see that are coming in.

HF: Have you ever experienced a moment of stress or a time when emotionally you had difficulty of controlling your feelings of anger, or disturbance, or whatever because of what the client was doing, what he had had done, or not done.

TM: Yes I've had those experiences that I'm, I'm thankful that I went through the experience at the Youth Services Center when I was confronted with those kind of things everyday, and naturally I had to develop that restraint in my emotions, restraint in my outburst of feelings, see. And naturally the counselor is probably symbolically identified as a sounding board and I tried to develop that kind of philosophy as I work with the students and so even at the high school level I think I was able to control those kind of feelings very— Once in awhile I was just to the point where I want to get up and do. . . grab the individual, but you know, that, to react to their actions isn't a proper way of, of counseling a individual because they have their feelings and we need to have them submit their feelings freely and from thereon work with them see?

HF: Right. Now, a, Tom, I know you're a busy person with your occupation and other activities, how do you maintain an optimum physical and mental health?

TM: I think as I realize that you know that a, these daily activities that I'm involved in are quite a lot of mental and physical challenges so, a, usually everyday I go through kind of a routine, a period of time where either I need to either if there's no outside work like in the winter time I use the trampoline a lot. I exercise on the little, what is it about a four by four size trampoline.

HF: Kind of an indoor, indoor trampoline.

TM: Indoor, and then I turn on the talking booth machine as a kind of light novel as I listen to it I kind of jog for probably an hour.

HF: In other words keep your, you keep your heart going a pretty good clip.

TM: Yes.

HF: For a quite a long period of time.

TM: Yes, at least a, I think if a normal is 70 I like to double it and make it about a 140 heart beat per minute.

HF: Can you get that out of the trampoline? I think you can, can you?

TM: Yes, and then if you get a little tired you can slow down you know, but...

HF: I use a bicycle over at the Health and Racquet Center.

TM: I see, uh-huh.

HF: Well that's interesting.

TM: And then I do a lot of floor exercises, sit-ups, um, pushups, um, knee bends, you know all kinds of, of physical movement that exercise all parts of my body and muscles in my body. Uh, during the summer months I do a lot of outside work: gardening, taking care of the yard, a, keeping up the various things that are necessary that is associated with home life you know animals.

HF: People ever ask you as they do me how can you tell the difference between the weeds and the vegetables?

TM: Ah, people ask me that a lot, but well—

HF: Anyway it's easily done isn't it Tom?

TM: Yes, it is easily done if, if a two plants are very, I don't know I think it's my past experience. I notice odors of leaves, I know what a, a red root leaf odor smells like or a lands quarter see. I usually kind of pinch it in my fingers and then smell it, see and I can tell the weed odor as compared.

HF: The tiny red root to me and the beet when they first initial, when they first come up they're quite a bit the same.

TM: Uh-huh.

HF: You know the regular table beet

TM: Yeah.

HF: And I have difficulty, um, getting the weeds out of the carrots when they're first coming. That's, that's my big problem.

TM: I, I leave those until they get a little larger you know so you can distinguish them so, and then probably a, a, my wife goes along to get those initial ones, but after they grow up it's pretty well very easy.

HF: It's pretty easy, there's no problem at all is there actually.

TM: And then I usually have a peg on each end of the row as to whether the seeds are planted and I draw a line from one peg to the other and then I usually just take all the

weeds out on both sides of the line, see. And then if you leave weeds in, weeds that are left within, within the plants I can pull later on see. So that's how I keep my garden kind of clean so during the growing period there's not covered with leaves all over the garden. I clean between the rows by using this line.

HF: That's a good hobby to have. I know that I've heard about your exploits, exploits fishing on the Snake River and the Henry's Fork. That's one of your hobbies too, fishing right?

TM: Fishing is another of my hobbies yes.

HF: Tell me a little about it. Can a blind person be a successful fisherman?

TM: I think they can yes whether by accident or what you, you get, I have yet to go, to come home without a fish and I've been many a times and I, usually it's nice to go with someone who is sighted so they can, I think if you venture on your own it's very difficult to find those areas that, that are conducive to getting bites. But I usually go to a sighted person and they says, "Well look there's a deep hole right in front of you. So that's how I start and I just work through deep hole you know.

HF: Do you bait your own hook?

TM: Yes, I bait my own hooks.

HF: How do you get your hooks untangled from a willow bush?

TM: I follow the line and then, and then I break, break the willow twig right off, see and I bring to where I can look at it and not look at it, feel it and then untangle it. It's, it's a, it requires a lot of patience I think in trying to, and then it gets to the point that you just can't do it. You cut and put a new hook on.

HF: And that happens of course when you have a snag isn't it sometimes and the water is too deep to get to it.

TM: Yeah, I've had some choice experiences in the river, um, I've fallen in, a, clear over my head and I've also stumbled over a big rock in the swift waters where you lose, lose your balance and just go down fifteen or twenty feet before you can even, fifty or a hundred feet before you can gain your balance to stand up again. So all these things are part of, part of your excitement and enjoyment about fishing. And I think it's something that is really a diversion from your daily life that I think is a preservation of your ego too and your self esteem because you find how I can do this, you know these kinds of things that ordinary people with vision can do and naturally you've got to more or less.

HF: And I think a blind person needs this, perhaps more than the sighted person.

TM: Right, uh-huh.

HF: To be enthusiastic of life.

TM: Right.

HF: To be excited of life.

TM: Right, uh-hem.

HF: And now. . .

TM: Yes.

HF: In the quiet of your home, a, do you enjoy reading?

TM: Yes, that's one of my big hobbies, too is reading. I think I've never enjoyed more than anything else because I think this area carries you into the, a, a field of life that probably you wouldn't expect you know like even, even when you travel I never get the real choice feeling about traveling unless so effectively in a book, see. While just the other day we went to Hawaii, a, I think as far as I'm concerned I could enjoy Hawaii right here in my living room just by reading a book about Hawaii rather than you know getting involved right over there. Unless it's adequately explained as to, as to the environment that I'm in and the things that are, a, a noticeable by vision see. The beauty of the, the beach and all those things you just can't comprehend unless it's explained vividly and who can explain it more vividly more than an individual that is talented in putting those things into words and that's found in books. That's why I really enjoy the reading part of it.

HF: What form or media do you mainly use in inquiring your knowledge and your entertainment?

TM: Most of it is tapes and records, a those things that are, are, that requires for example very you might say concise in their explanations. For example in the spiritual end of it I use the Braille writings a lot for scriptural material, the Bible and all the other scriptural material. I like to use, use the, a Braille so I can ponder and mull over the things that are said you know. I read it.

HF: Excellent, I know exactly what you, I emphasize with what you're saying. Do you like Braille, a, for other reasons? For example magazines, do you, you read any Braille magazines?

TM: I like Braille for two reasons: number one if it's something that you want to really want to retain as a very informative material, it gives you a, a moment to pause see while the tapes they go along so fast and then you have to play it back over and over again to get the full meaning. Another thing that is very essential is the spelling of words you just can't find that in recording and types. The spelling of words, see and I think the Braille

copies provide that opportunity of actually recognizing the structure of a word and how it's spelled.

HF: How fast do you read Tom?

TM: Not very fast, with one very you just don't go too fast. But it's—

HF: How, how is it come that you only learned with one finger?

TM: I don't know. I just started with that finger and naturally that's the one picks up the messages the quickest so I never tried any other fingers, see. But every year I make it a program to read a, a book in Braille. I finished *the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants*, and now this year I'm starting on *the Old Testament*, working on *the Old Testament* to read that in Braille.

HF: What magazine did you read in Braille.

TM: There's the, the *American Legion* that came out that I read quite a bit and then *Life and Health* sometimes comes in that I read and any other material I can get you know.

HF: Do you ever use the *National Geographic*?

TM: No I haven't, Uh-huh.

HF: That's my favorite. Oh, is that in Braille.

TM: Uh-huh and with this compositor printout perforated that they're using in the printing of books and so forth and with the keys to the computer, the *National Geographic* comes to me as bout as quick as it does in print.

HF: Oh, is that right? I've never subscribed to it so—

TM: Right, I love it, I love it. It gives you a basic knowledge of what's in the heavens, what's in the earth, geography, history, everything, it's just, just a wonderful resource. Tom what is your opinion about, about Braille? Now let me say this that you read magazines, materials, articles, and there's quite a controversy about Braille. Whether it should be expanded by the NLS, the National Library Service, or whether they should because it's so expensive, or whether they should pull in their horns as it were and not appropriate so much money for that media, but give more to the production of cassette tapes and things. What do you think?

HF: I have some mixed emotions about that. I think Braille is still a very vital, necessary part of a blind individual's life, a, especially for his own personal use, I think if you wanted to write a personal letter to someone you know, where you don't have to have someone peruse it on a typing machine to see if it's correct or not I think that resource for communicating with blind individuals is a, is a necessary thing adding some privacy and

also confidentiality as the maturity you want to convey with an individual. Also, secondly I think it's still necessary for fundamental perusing, deep thinking, these kinds of things, Braille is vitally essential. In my work especially all these confidential materials that are on file, I really appreciate the Braille system to provide me that information when needed.

Side two continuing the interview with Tom Miyasaki on how the blind of Eastern Idaho see the experience of life. You were commenting about the advantages of Braille, Tom.

TM: I was, I did indicate that it is vitally necessary for those things that are very personal to you as far as some of the informative material that you like to, a, keep as on file, you know for teacher use, as that, and also I think Braille information is, is a lot easier and accessible to an individual. You get material on tape or on record it is very to find a specific area that you want to study. While the Braille will have the contents, the page number, you get right to it and get the material that you want to get at very efficiently. On the cassette and the records does not provide that kind of facility. They come up with tones and things like that for certain areas, but still it isn't always as good as Braille. A, I think a, Braille should probably become less available to us and large books of the novel area these kinds of things. I rather read on record or on tape on those kind of things, that those materials that you need to use in your daily work probably the Braille is a very effective way of keeping information.

HF: Have you ever tried using the Optican?

TM: No I haven't. Uh-uh.

HF: Or any other, a media that our modern technology has now provided?

TM: They, I've, I've had experience with the, I can't remember what the name of it, it's where the print is converted into voice, a machine that converts print into voice, I've had experience with that.

HF: Kurzweil.

HF: Kurzweil, but that's still is, unless you train your ears to pick that up, it's a very you might say anxiety filled moment of really trying to decipher what they were saying unless you get trained to it. I still feel like the Braille still gives me the kind of messages that I want and also the talking book and the tape recordings provide a good mode, unless they can perfect that a little bit more.

HF: Uh-huh.

TM: Probably it won't be, and, and the expense of it is just exorbitant to the extent that you can't use it in your own home.

HF: I appreciate those comments for 1980 and as it might be applied you know twenty years from now the Kurzweil or some other related apparatus might then be used you know factoid. Tom I would like now to go back, to get a little of your own personal family background. Who were your parents?

TM: My parents were originally from Japan. They migrated in the nineteen hundred and six area of time. They come into this area, they landed in San Francisco, my father first came into this country and worked with the railroad finding his way inland to the state of Idaho and worked in the sugar beet area and finally established himself as a, as a, as a rent, a farmer, renting from the Caucasians that were in the area and that was how he established his a...

HF: And what was his name?

TM: Kitaro Miyasaki.

HF: And how do you spell that last name?

TM: K-I-T-A-R-O, M-I-Y-A-S-A-K-I .

HF: Now the name, you have changed it at all have you?

TM: No, uh-uh,

HF: And your mother?

TM: Mother is Mitsu, she was a Watanabe. W-A-T-A-N-A-B-E and a—

HF: She also came from Japan?

TM: Yes, she also came from Japan about, oh, two or three years after he had established himself here.

HF: Did he, did he know her in Japan?

TM: Yes, uh-huh. They were um, a, neighbors while they were in Japan.

HF: And what area of Japan?

TM: They call it Niigata. It's about the northern, not clear northern, but the more northern part of the mainland of Japan called Hidamura and that's where they came from.

HF: Um, they, after they arrived, or she arrived they were married and did they have, how about your, tell me about your family, your brothers and sisters and where did you live here in Idaho?

TM: We lived in the, the first place of my father's residence was at the Peter J. Rick's farm at the foot hills of the, the Rexburg vents there. And they had a old log hut with a, with dirt roof. That was their first place and I think four children were born there, a, my oldest, two older brothers and two older sisters. Then we moved just west of Rexburg on the old Smith place. It was about a mile west of Rexburg and that's where I was born. It was during the period of the Flu epidemic and they tell me that they just couldn't find a doctor to help anyone and they were just busy taking care of the flu victims and so my father went around trying to find someone who would help deliver me and I think it was a Mister Tee Hikida. He went to his place trying to get his wife to help, but she was ill with the flu so he came down, so I was delivered by a m, a male midwife.

HF: Your father or Mister Hikida? Is that related to Ted?

TM: Yeah, it's Ted Hikida's father.

HF: Oh, that's interesting.

TM: Yeah, and so that's how I came into the world, is during a period of the flu epidemic and I can recall growing up to the age of about three or four years in the Smith farm and then we moved to Burton area on the Emil Kauer residence and farmed there and I think we lived there a year, and then we moved to Hibbard on the Hyrum Catner farm, and I think that we lived there nearly twenty years as my teenage years right there on the Hibbard farm.

HF: Dad was engaged in farming?

TM: Uh-huh.

HF: For himself or for...?

TM: Yes, uh-huh, for himself. We helped along with the farm, but the interesting thing is that a, during that period of time, um, my mother and father thought well that our children should have some Japanese education so mother took my two oldest brothers and my two oldest sisters back to Japan to give them a hand on education of the Japanese education see and Japanese customs and I was just six months old when she took them to Japan that and she stayed there for six months because when I come back I was about a year old. So I was the oldest of the family growing up in America.

HF: Well, did your older brothers and sisters did they stay there?

TM: Yeah, they stayed there for eleven years.

HF: Oh, for Pete's sake.

TM: Uh-huh, and so I didn't have exposure to the English language till I entered first grade, so—

HF: Your, your family spoke entirely Japanese?

TM: Japanese so I was exposed to it and so I was very embarrassed. I can remember a, trying to compete with the rest of the other students in reading and things like that and I just couldn't understand the words. For example, this is how much knowledge I have of the English language during, it was Valentine's Day and naturally during that day where we usually exchange Valentines and write to somebody from Tommy, see. And I didn't know the difference between to and from well I thought it sure sounds good to write to Tommy and from somebody else and that day I got twice as many Valentine cards as the rest of the students in the, in the classroom because I received my own as well as somebody else's. And I was so embarrassed I stayed out of school for a long day before I recognized that was my writing, see as I got home. So that's how it was embarrassing it was to the knowledge of English and I think a...

HF: Tell me about your formal education and then through grade school.

TM: So I went through Hibbard, Hibbard school district twenty-seven of at that time till the eighth grade then I entered Madison high school. A, and I graduated out of Madison high school in 1937, subsequent to that, I, during the winter and sometime the spring I entered, I attended Rick's College because father still wanted me to help on the farm. A, my brothers and sisters from Japan came back to this country in 1930 and they had a real difficult time trying to adjust the English language and they still have an accent as they talk because they had the foreign accent.

HF: Do they feel in evaluating that experience that it was helpful to them or maybe a disadvantage?

TM: I think they feel, they feel like it may have been a disadvantage to them because it was very difficult for them to relate you know and they're going to live the rest of their lives here, they feel like they could have. But I feel like that they had some advantages because they could understand the native tongue very efficiently, a, but I feel that it probably been better if they stayed here and acquired the native language a little latter on in their life. I think it's very vital during the growing period that they should have stayed with their family, I feel that way about it.

HF: Tom, did you have any eye problems during these years, during these teenage years?

TM: No I had twenty-twenty vision in both eyes clear through high school and I was entering college, Rick's college in about 1942, subsequent to Pearl Harbor in December of 41, a month later I was inducted into the service.

HF: And up to that time you had no inclination that anything would be wrong?

TM: Nope, and then I went and served in the military service, um, right after the basic training there was a lot of emotion in the United States in reference to whether or not we

could be trusted as American citizens. And kind of feeling existed even in the services because they gathered up all the, all the soldiers that were enlisted of American and Japanese ancestry into a, a certain camp in the armed services and held us for a period of a year deciding what to do you know.

HF: Do you think that the people of the Upper Snake River Valley, the Eastern Idaho ever harbored any feelings like, a, was expressed obviously along the Pacific coast toward the Japanese ancestry people.

TM: Probably not as a harshly and not as openly, but there was some feeling because up and down the valley, I wasn't here at the time because I left only a month after Pearl Harbor, but they said there was various service stations saying no Japs allowed so they did also express that type of a feeling see.

HF: I see.

TM: And so there could have been feelings such as that, I heard of my, a, younger brothers and sisters telling how comfortable, uncomfortable it was at times, at times to go a restaurant or some places of entertainment where they were rejected you know. They weren't wanted see and so, a, there was some feelings, in fact I, I think there was quite a bit of feelings and I think justly due because the whole propaganda was to hate the Japanese see and a—

HF: Don't you think it's kind of remarkable that after the, after the war was over and everything was settled, a, now in Eastern Idaho, do you think there's even a hint of this type of attitude toward the Japanese?

TM: I don't think there is because now they're intermarrying, see. Japanese are marrying the White, a, and vice versa, so I think it's eliminated a lot. I think the, the, our move in the direction of a, a, I think they had what they called the Japanese American Citizens League, and organization of the second generation Japanese.

HF: They call those the Nisei?

TM: Yeah, the Nisei-s and they had went on record that every able Japanese young man voluntary enlisted into the service of the United States and dedicate themselves to that service to, to prove their loyalty to this country even by death, you know sacrifice. And because of that, a, a, philosophical motivation the 42nd Regimental Team was organized consisting of nothing but Americans of Japanese ancestry and they went into the European threat of war and was recognized the most decorated unit in the entire history, in the history of the, of the US armed services.

HF: Now you were part of that weren't you Tom?

TM: No, I wasn't part of that.

HF: Oh.

TM: I was with the military intelligence service, naturally after the, the initial was the 100th Battalion from nothing, all the American of Japanese ancestry from Hawaii were in to Italy and made such a remarkable record. That's when they accepted you know, more or less accepted the loyalty of the Americans of Japanese ancestry and it kind of broke the crust so they were sending them to all kinds, different areas of field, even to the extent that they were using us as interpreters in the Pacific theater of war where we were contending with our own people.

HF: Japanese actually fought with the Italians. . .

TM: Yes.

HF: And the Germans I guess.

TM: And the Japanese, too, because we were sent out into the Pacific area as in the military intelligence field as interrogators you know.

HF: Uh-huh.

TM: And translating documents in Japanese see. Anybody that had any knowledge of the Japanese language was sent to this military intelligence school for further training to make themselves proficient in speaking the language as well as translation to go out into the field in the Pacific Islands to, as soon as the enemies are captured we can interrogate them right there to find the enemy position, gather up documents, translate them so that we can keep, gather any, um, attend any kind of military strategic things that we need to know, see, immediate translation, see. So that's why I was in military intelligence, I was training for that at the time that I lost my eye sight.

HF: Now, Tom share with us a, just what the circumstances were that brought about this, oh, tragedy say in your life? Maybe that isn't a good phrase, I maybe I shouldn't try.

TM: I think it's good enough only in that there, there was no specific causal thing that may cause my blindness, there was nothing that they could put their finger on, only to subsequent to experiencing a simulated warfare where we went out, out into the field prior to our being shipped over to sea we have a kind of a realistic war condition. And naturally they were shooting tracer bullets at us and we had to hit the ground when they, when they, when they shot, shot at us so they, emphasizing the fact that we have to hit, hit the ground hard and fast to preserve our lives, you know, and in that process I could have bumped my head severally to cause a slight hemorrhage in my eye.

HF: In both eyes.

TM: In both eyes and I saw this little spot in my eye so I reported on sick call, and from there on they didn't have the medical technology to go in and cauterize those areas of

hemorrhage see, and they had to be a natural process of healing and in that process something happened that didn't, a, a, the hemorrhage didn't stop and by the time it stopped it had detached the retina of both of my eyes. And so I found my self in a situation where I was completely blind immediately because the, the blood just filled the distressed humor of the eyeball area, see. And they said probably after the blood has been absorbed you may get some partial vision back and I think it was kind of a traumatic experience because there was a big clock as I remember in the hospital ward that I was convalescing in and receiving treatment. The bold letters were written in Roman numerals and every morning after the blood had more or less absorbed, absorbed by my body I could see those Roman numerals by going right up against the wall, you know, and each morning I was hoping that those numerals will become clearer, you know.

HF: But they weren't?

TM: But they weren't, eventually it got to the point where the, all the numerals in the circle looked like one big black circle, see and black hands pointing to those areas.

HF: How old were you at this time?

TM: I was 25.

HF: Oh, and unmarried, unmarried or were you married?

TM: No, I wasn't married, yes I was married at the time because I was married prior to, a, a, when they, it was determined that I may go over seas soon. It seems like my girlfriend who is my wife now wanted to be married before I left, see.

HF: Uh-hum.

TM: And so, so we had a few months together, in fact after a couple months after our marriage is when I had this experience, see.

HF: The fact that you had a wife and a responsibility there and these would, would add to your concern wouldn't it?

TM: Yes it would because you know; here I'm going to be a burden to my wife for the rest of her life, see, and even things of separation come to my mind. I didn't want to have her to be burdened with me you know, if I wouldn't be able to see. But I appreciate the fact now as I reflect upon that she was devoted and stuck with me, and she was willing to live with the things that I had. And, and I appreciated that very much because during that period of time I think no one needs more important in preserving themselves and their sanity you might say in that there is still goodness in life, without support of individuals who can give that encouragement. I think every blind individual if they experience from, from having sight to sightlessness during that transitional period of accepting that, that situation is a very difficult moment. I don't care who it, but to, during that transitional period with the support, not to the extent of being overly protective, but

to the extent that providing encouragement that there is still life and good life ahead of you with the proper kind of training, recognizing very keenly that there are alternative methods of doing things without our sight that will probably add at least a, a, greater portion of normality or a human individual as he goes through life. And so I think when the, when the entire bold face of the wall clock finally disappeared I had to really say, "I am blind," and I've got to do something about it, see. And I think that's when it really changed that, up to that point in time every moment of the day as I got up in the morning, will this day be a little better and will my vision improve when I was living with that kind of philosophy or that kind of experience I think was very anxious for me feeling a lot of internal feelings about being blind, a, a, when the medical officer said, "Soldier, you'll never see again." That kind of revelation just brought to your mind does that mean that I'm going to live a life of an existence which is constantly portrayed I guess during my 23, 25 years of sighted life of an old man with a, ill clad clothing with a cane tapping the sidewalk with a can asking for alms for that day's sustenance, see.

HF: Had you actually in sight witnessed such an experience?

TM: No, I had not, only that I've seen it.

HF: I mean prior, prior to the time you went blind.

TM: I've seen some, a, yeah, I've seen some, some begging on the streets.

HF: You had actually seen it.

TM: Yeah, uh-hum in those kind of—

HF: So it conjured, that kind of image was conjured in your mind.

TM: Yes, and, and you know does that mean that I'll never be able to see the blue of the sky, you know the stars in the evening, see, the majestic Teton peaks that are silhouetted, silhouetted against the eastern horizon, all these, the beauty of nature you know, the smiles of my friends and these my loved ones, does that mean all these things see gone from my curtain only to be probably reproduced in my dreams, see. These are the things that ran through my mind and I think literally at that moment in time I was literally burning in a crucible of self pity and self misery, feeling that the, if life was worth living. And I think I had a choice experience following that war that there was an individual that was there that kept whistling and humming a tune each day, and I thought to myself who could be happy enough to even whistle and hum a tune when this entire hospital ward is filled with soldiers who had lost some part of their body from the destructions of war, see. And naturally I asked the nurse who's that fellow in that direction that seems like he's happy and the experience with him I guess gave me a new light, a, a lift in life because there in that corner was a, a basket case soldier, in other words the destruction of war had destroyed his eyesight, his hearing, he had lost both of his arms and both of his legs, and yet from the adventure of that bandaged head came forth the whistling and humming of a tune, see and probably a gentle nudge to his body would indicate your presence and just

give you more of one, one of the most generous and courageous smile. And I think, I thought to myself here a person you might say had nothing to live for, still live with that attitude that there was still something to live for. Gave me an inner boost of saying, "If a fellow in that condition can do that why can't I?" Another experience that probably reflects in my mind is, I was in a hospital where I was the only blind soldier and they treated me like a king, you know the food was brought to me there was a nurse there just helping me to learn how to feed myself and all these things and all of a sudden I was transferred to another hospital and I was expecting the same kind of treatment and as in the evening and the nurse called down the hallway there so that kind of leveled my bedspread out hoping that they'd bring the food on a tray as I received in the other hospital and all I heard was shuffling of feet, leaving the ward you know as the last foot went by me I said, "Hey, don't they bring the chow here?" and he says, "No we have to go to the cafeteria" and he says, "Do you want to go with me?" I said, "Sure, I'll go. I don't want to stay hungry." So I followed his elbow, hooked onto his elbow and I guess we went two or three blocks of windy corridors just laying that way and finally we got to the cafeteria, I sat down and ate and he brought me back. And I thought josh he must be the guide in the ward to help us along, and I asked him, "Are you the guide of our ward?" and he says, "No I've got two plastic eyes."

HF: For Pete's sake.

TM: And that's when I said to myself, "if that guy can go through two or three blocks of kind, winding corridors, get to the cafeteria, and bring me back without any help, I can do it myself. The next day I didn't ask any help for breakfast. I didn't get my breakfast. I lost myself and it was about noon by the time I found my hospital ward, see and finally got back to my hospital ward so I was hungry by then so I asked him, I told him this, "I missed my breakfast, I couldn't find my way" and he says, "Do you want to try it again," and I says, "You bet I'm want to try it again." And I didn't find the cafeteria in the lunch time either, she gave me directions, I got lost, but I did end up in the canteen area, I had a few, a change in my pocket so I bought me a candy bar and a coke to serve as my, more or less sustain myself for that day, but by supper time I found that cafeteria. And I think it's these experiences that you associate with people with the same kind of a, you might say affliction that you may have and are able to do it that gives you that inner strength and inner encouragement to do it.

HF: That's a dramatic presentation Tom. I, I appreciate hearing it myself and I'm sure somebody else will. Did you get some federal and state assistance in making this transition back to rehabilitation?

TM: Naturally being involved with the, with armed services and being service connected naturally the, the armed services provided all the necessary, a, experience academically as well as you know the training that is necessary for rehabilitation. They provided all those kind of resources available to bring us back to where we can function and so I think I appreciate that because I attended what they call the first blind rehabilitation services for the, for the armed services people that had lost their eyesight at Old Farm Convalescent Hospital in Hartford Connecticut, see. And I went through that program

and subsequent to that I come to this area and then enrolled in the Utah State College in Utah, Logan Utah. And it was interesting there, a, the Veteran counselors discouraged me from getting a college degree. They says, "Gosh these colleges don't have facilities to, to provide the necessary assistance to get you through college. Why don't you go vocational then you won't have to go through so much of the academic area." I guess there's some stubbornness in me, I, I decided to go get my degree in college because I just wanted to go to college. So they put me kind of a probation to see, I, how I could function in the college setting and I had to take about five courses, five units of class work during the summer months as a, a probationary period to see if I can make it, high enough grade to, you know function in the college setting and I guess the same kind of feeling that existed while I was going through the training program, you know if that guy can do it I can of was built in me so I never exerted so much energy, in, in the academic challenges as I did then those summer months. And an average, being an average student I have never received all "A's" in my report card in my life. Then during those summer months, those five courses I'd taken I come out with all "A's." And this kind of convinced the reference people that I probably could function, so that's why I continued to pursue the college level, my college experience, terminating my work there in 1949 starting in 1946 and ended in 1949, with a Bachelors Science degree in agriculture.

HF: That's tremendous Tom, that's, that's really tremendous. With the, that formal education and experiences you've had, you can handle this question I'm sure, a, with honesty and real depth. How do you evaluate blindness? Is it a handicap or isn't it?

TM: I think the word, a handicapped is kind of a semantic term you know. It's seems like some individuals it's something that is a detriment, an impediment, something that is a roadblock in a person's life and to other persons it means a sort of an inconveniences to the individual just like a, some illnesses are an inconveniences to other individuals. A, I think the individual can find alternative methods of, of overcoming what limitations you may have. However, blindness is rather unique. It is one of the five senses that is vitally important I think and you've got to accept the fact that there are some areas that you just cannot function without that physical vision.

HF: Driving.

TM: Driving, yes, a viewing a beautiful landscape you know you can have an individual describe that landscape in detail, but you'll never see it as you want to see it. You have another individual describe the same scenery and it's entirely different from the other individual that described it previously. Simply from the fact that individuals view things differently the same thing, and you yourself if you were able to see would view that differently from the other two, see. So these are the things that probably you'll be denied of, but other than the, other than that I'm very strong in my feelings about this that a person can make a good wholesome life, enjoy life and probably be awarded, enumerated with those blessings that are necessary to say, say my life has been good. When you reflect, when I reflect upon my own life at this moment in time at the age where I'm just about thinking about retiring, a, my family is grownup they're honorable, good students, upright citizens, they have a family of their own and we are more or less given the

adequate things of life, a good home, three square meals, all the activity that you want to enrich an individual's personal daily life. You just can't feel down hearted about the, about the limitations that you have, the inconvenience that you have.

HF: Tom in your opinion, what real problems do blind people face as they pursue you know the experience of living?

TM: I think as I reflect upon my own life and the lives of other blind individuals, a, as I have associated my experience on the Idaho State Blind Commission and as I attend their meetings everyday about, a, a once every two or three months and view the students that are going through that program I think attitude is one of the most important factors in relating whether or not the individual can accept their condition as a, as a handicap or an inconvenience you know and accept that inconvenience and do something about it. I think the, the whole population of blind individuals; you might say is about the same as the population of the sighted. Within the sighted population you can find some individuals that are discouraged a, even to the extent that they feel like life is not even worth living and I think you can find the same, a, kind of individuals in the blind population, too. Some are energetic, positive in their thinking even to the extent that they're just as independent as can be. They're enjoying life to its fullness while others are downtrodden and feel like life is nothing to live for and has nothing to offer them, a, but the only thing that they're concerned about is probably getting up and having something fed to them, see. And I feel like that attitude has a vital part in whether or not a blind person is going to enjoy life or not enjoy it.

HF: Very good. Would you care to enumerate some of the successful blind that you have come to know in your life?

TM: Yeah, I think it's those kind of individuals that probably inspires another blind individual saying, say that individual can do with that kind of situation, why can't I and probably you yourself is one of the prime examples. I probably I didn't know you personally, but I read about you or heard about you, the things that you're doing, your early life and high school, how you walk to Rexburg, and all those kind of things, see that are associated with your life. Um, I can even remember when, even when I had my eyesight, a, Mary Siddoway, who is Mary Collins now, her gift in music how she could play the violin as well as the piano. All the, Lynn Cruiser is I think the name from Saint Anthony and numerous other, Anderson is his first name.

HF: Jesses Anderson.

TM: Yes, I got acquainted with him as soon as I come into and all along the way is numerous other individuals that I experience not only in my college and academic period of my time that I've run into fine individuals that have succeeded when you say, "Gosh, how am I going to get this assignment done in class?" You have a blind student next to you that is doing it see. These kinds of things just give you a uplift, kind of a resource of saying, say here is a position, an individual with the same, a, limitations that I have and is able to get along with it, see. And I think, I think the blind's best resource of

encouragement to do things is by experiences of those individuals that have gone through the, through the challenges of living of blindness.

HF: I don't want you to mention any names, but probably you too, have known of individuals, blind individuals who seemingly had all the opportunities to succeed and yet despite these positive blessings in their lives; money and opportunities they just seem to fail. How do you account for that?

TM: Yes, I've had those kind of experiences with you know realizing and recognizing individuals that have had those experiences and probably it's very difficult for me to access and say and say what is the, the one specific that caused them to do that and probably, as I mentioned before the attitude in accepting their present situation, not willing to, a, recognize that there are alternative methods of doing things, probably finding and this is a good time to, um, depend about the resources of others to make an existence. You know those kind of individuals are also, a, a found in the sighted population, too, are more or less a parasite. That they feel like their only way of existence is by, by using the resources of other individuals, see. And I, I feel like those kind of people I don't know what you can do to motivate them to feel that there is still goodness in life, that there is independence in life if you want it to actually seek for it.

HF: Tom you commented that you were a member on the Idaho Commission for the Blind, a, and I, I want to ask you here to share some of the knowledge you have concerning the various agency's services that the state of Idaho, through the Idaho Commission provide for the blind of this state that they may have that chance to succeed.

TM: Okay. The Idaho State Commission for the Blind came into being in 1967 after realizing the need for a program for the blind of Idaho in reference to, to re-orientating themselves so that they might become independent to get a positive way of life and actually prior to that it seems our program was nothing, but kind of a financial aid, just a probably a type of a program where we helped them make their living day after day without any direct program that will develop the individual. Now we have a program, through the Commission where an individual might have an opportunity number one we're really concerned about the attitude of the individual to develop a positive attitude, of developing confidence in themselves, developing that, a, a inner initiative that they could do things to the extent that they can find, a, joy and satisfaction in, in what they have accomplished and so we have a program which is trying to develop the students for example they'll, they'll probably have two, three areas that they, they work at when they're training. Number one is the ability to develop skills in traveling by themselves, taking care of their personal needs like cooking, regular household duties, duties that are necessary for existence, um, a, the areas of media and communication, learning how to write Braille, to use the typewriter, a regular typewriter and other resources that are necessary for conveying their feelings and their, and also to gain information, to gain knowledge within themselves, um and we have a program that's orientated like an industrial arts area, but the whole purpose of that is not for the individual to develop skill of being a carpenter or anything like that, but the whole process to instill in the minds of those blind individuals that, to develop confidence. They learn how to operate all kinds

of mechanical, electrical power machinery there in the carpentry area you know, running the radial saw, the bench saw, the a, hmm, skill saw, the hand saw, the square, all things associated with that and they have to go through a building one little project during that whole program.

HF: Tape two side one continuing the interview with Tom Miyasaki on the subject how the blind of eastern Idaho see the experience of life. Well, go ahead Tom and you're, you were continuing on the, in responding to the subject what, what services the state of Idaho through the, the Idaho what do you call it?

TM: The Commission.

HF: The Commission for the Blind.

TM: As I was saying that the industrial arts area, the industrial arts area is more or less developed only for the sole purpose of a, building confidence in the individual. After whatever period it takes for individuals to find themselves pretty well self-reliant in the various, a, the outlook on life and their opportunity for trying to develop toward independence then the Commission provides financial service and whether they want to go to a vocational training program, a academic training program and colleges if their family cannot provide the financial aid then the assistance is given by the, by the Commission to provide that kind of a aid, to, to meet the necessary training, to have them gainfully involved in an occupation, and those that are of, that are not willing to, are not interested in a vocation, but more or less becoming more self-reliant and independent in their home life as a house wife, as an independent individual well, we help them toward that kind of a goal, see.

HF: In figures, how many, how many college students would you say are now attending a, the schools of higher learning, a, in Idaho or well, blind persons you know?

TM: I think on average I think you have served nearly ten to fifteen a year.

HF: Per year?

TM: Per year, every year in the academic training program, a, two or three, maybe four in the vocational area, see.

HF: Okay. Now—

TM: Ceremony on the job training type of thing.

HF: Now about the adult blind?

TM: This is the adult blind.

HF: Well, the older persons say they become blind at 50 or 60 years of age, how large a group are you serving there? What can you do for them?

TM: I think we are more or less trying to access their needs on to what they want to do, a, some of them might become blind while right in their occupation, see and if they feel like the kind of occupation that they're not, that they were in or they cannot very well perform, you know if a person, person was a truck driver or something like that the loss of eyesight, they just can't go into that field so naturally we, we interview them. Those kinds of things where they can be comfortably and adequately cook their own meals, take care of their homes, walk around their premises by, a, a, use of a cane, and if they feel very comfortable about having a dog subsequent to training there we'll send them to a, a, a place where they can obtain a seeing eye dog, whatever is necessary to a, implement a program where they feel a lot more independent then what they were.

HF: Suppose the retired person, the one at 70 years old just become blind doesn't feel good about leaving the home, is there a program that the state provides whereby teachers are sent?

TM: Yes.

HF: Can go into the home and instruct?

TM: We have interim teachers going into the, into the, into the areas and teach these things. For example, those that are pretty well you might say considered shutting, shut-ins you know not to much outside activities we provide the talking book service, we provide those kinds of little things that they might like to do for instance needlework, a, a crocheting, something like that, they, these teachers teach those kind of things to them to, to spend their time. In other words even in the shut-in, in the shut-in cases they're providing those kind of things that will make them a little more comfortable, a little more independent about you know what they want to do within the, within the environment of their home, see. Instead of saying, hey calling on every moment get me this, get me that, see what they can do with themselves.

HF: Do you have an estimate of how many adult blind there are in the state of Idaho?

TM: There is no clear cut estimate, I think last year in reference to the, the we had between five and six hundred that are, are receiving the, a, talking book services, but—

HF: That would include talking book tape, cassette tapes.

TM: Yes, uh-hum.

HF: And things of this nature.

TM: But we, we estimate if, if our, if we can expand our services we could serve as high as two thousand blind individual in the state of Idaho.

HF: And there aren't that many?

TM: And—

HF: Do you think?

TM: There may, there is that many.

HF: You think there's two thousand.

TM: Uh-hum.

HF: Is that right?

TM: There's a lot of people that we haven't come in contact with yet.

HF: And some are very reticent and they don't want to be helped.

TM: They don't want to be helped.

HF: Now of course Idaho in 1980 still has the residential blind school.

TM: Right.

HF: At, at Gooding?

TM: Yes.

HF: And do you have any idea how many blind there are?

TM: I don't know how many attending, attending there. I would say between 30 and 40.

HF: A, and would you say that, I think your comment was that there were maybe ten per year blind students that are in higher education.

TM: Yeah, ten to fifteen blind students are requesting higher education services, uh-huh.

HF: Kind of as an annual.

TM: And our services in the Commission itself, there are, we are constantly having students there, a, and ten to fourteen students there, a, every time I go there, you know they stay there for about six to eight months and then they are moved up, you know.

HF: Orientation program.

TM: Yeah, to the Orientation Program, see. So but we are always having between ten and fourteen students there. So you can see, a, a, I think they're sort of estimating that there are at least in between, a fifteen hundred and two thousand blind individuals in the state of Idaho.

HF: A, how bout the personnel that um, um, that operates the Commission for the Blind do you find that there's blind representation there and also blind who are actually carrying the services to the, to their fellow blind?

TM: Yeah, uh-hum we have oh, we have one sighted person that's in the industrial arts area, he's a sighted person and we have one in, in travel orientation that is sighted, no, maybe two and a few in the commission itself.

HF: And how many blind?

TM: And, and, and see we have a total of about 29 people involved in the commission who are hired you know people.

HF: And most of them are blind you're saying?

TM: Most, I'd say a good 75 %, um of them are blind. The administrator is sighted, we have a sighted individual in the field operation area, you know we have two locations, and there are at least one or two sighted persons, secretary and, and the field man may be sighted, see and we have these itinerant teachers are usually all blind students, blind individuals who go out except probably in the Pocatello area we have one area we have one lady that is sighted that is working in the itinerant part of the experience.

HF: Do you feel, of course this is a loaded question, but do you feel that the established commission for the blind has done a better job than was being done prior to that establishment?

TM: The, the statistics indicate that yes, the number of individuals that, that have been clothes as far as independence, acquiring jobs, we've never had that kind of, maybe they didn't keep any records, but we've never had that kind of a record prior to the inception of the commission programs, see. And I can remember in 1967 I think we, a, closed out probably three or four individuals for independence or into some kind of a, a, a vocational training program, see. Now we're running as high as 60 and 70, 70 individuals a year.

HF: You're more knowledgeable by far then I am, um in this area Tom, for the future um, let's talk about some hard statistics in the fields of um, where blind are actually making their own livelihoods in various scales, occupations, professions. Do we have any blind in the state of Idaho that are, that is engaged in, in the medical area or health service, health services? Can you think of anyone?

TM: As I remember I don't know whether they're doing it in the state of Idaho, but this individual is a physical therapist with his, that has been trained through that and is doing that and I can't remember whether or not they're, she, she or I think it's a she that's residing here or in another state. But she was actually went through the physical therapist program and is doing a fantastic job.

HF: Now, a there's a Neilson or a Nelson in, in Blackfoot.

TM: Blackfoot, right.

HF: That is a, a masseur, or a chiropractor, or nature path, or that related area.

TM: Yes.

HF: That's successful.

TM: Right.

HF: Can you think of anyone else in that area that is in that field in the state of Idaho?

TM: At the moment I can't reflect on anyone you know.

HF: Now in the, in the area practicing law I think one in the Twin Falls area, to my knowledge he is the only one practicing law. Of course, I practice law for many years but I'm on the bench now and cannot practice law so I think this one in Twin Falls to my knowledge is the only one practicing law at profession.

TM: Uh-hum.

HF: Now, a can you think if any other blind person who is in the professions in the state of Idaho?

TM: I know there are blind teachers, naturally I'm a counselor. There are several, a...

HF: Now there, there are blind teachers in the public schools?

TM: Yes.

HF: Who are they or where?

TM: I don't know it's somewhere, it's somewhere in the state of Idaho of Idaho. I can't exactly put my finger on it because if I had that list, you see every year when I go to the commission meetings they give us a list of individuals that are engaged, see and I, I, and there was a list of at least 20 or 30 people with different types of occupations.

HF: 20 or 30.

TM: Uh-hum.

HF: Okay now.

TM: Within the state of Idaho and it ranges from, you know, a carpentry work, um farming, a, um, a teaching profession, radio announcing, a, in, in other words it seems.

HF: Vending is quite important

TM: Vending is a big one, yeah. We have quite a large—

HF: And they, these venders are placed in to our state, a—

TM: State and federal buildings.

HF: State and federal buildings aren't they?

TM: Uh-hum, uh-hum, yeah, uh-hum.

HF: Okay.

TM: And—

HF: Now inform in that would take the nature I suppose of dairying, poultry maybe?

TM: Yeah, uh-hum. There was one person pursuing a poultry program. I don't know whether it's ever you know, whether he's got fully engaged in it or not.

HF: How bout the selling profession? Do you know of any?

TM: There should be someone that's selling. I don't know. I haven't recalled any.

HF: In the insurance area, maybe—

TM: Yeah. I know there is some out of state in the state of Utah there's an insurance salesman.

HF: Or products?

TM: In products you know.

HF: Selling products—

TM: Fuller brush, these kind of things, you know there are some doing that.

HF: In the state of Idaho do you think?

TM: I don't know. It'd be interesting for me to compile that probably one of these days, you know, get all this information.

HF: I think we ought to have some hard statistics, you know that.

TM: A, why don't I make it a point to get the commission people to provide that information for us and then we can have, you know your wife or somebody read it to you.

HF: I think that'd be helpful.

TM: Uh-hum.

HF: A, in this project, for this specific project, for a, a, to fix, what, this is what it was in 1980.

TM: Yes.

HF: And now in 1990 or the year 2000 it might be completely different—

TM: Right.

HF: You see and I, I think we, if you could make that available I think that would be, be tremendous.

TM: Yeah.

HF: Well, now Tom let's quickly go into, a, another area of your own personal affairs if you will? Who is your wife a, to whom were you married, and when and where?

TM: My wife is from, her name is Mariko Ogawa. We call her Mary. She resided in Osgood, Idaho, and we were married in May tenth of 1944, and I lost my eyesight in June I think. So it only the tenth of May to the end of June that I had my eyesight with her, see.

HF: Tell me about your family, your children.

TM: Then I have, our oldest boy's name is Rodney, then I have a daughter Donna, and another son Kevin, and an adopted boy Rick who is now twelve years old that's attending junior high school. Rodney's in the, he's in the physical therapy bit, occupation, a...

HF: And where does he live?

TM: In Sandy Utah.

TM: And my son Kevin is a social worker, he works in the Youth Services Center now in the same position that I was working.

HF: It's interesting, son following in dad's footsteps, huh? I knew about him; he worked with one of my clients.

TM: Uh-huh and then Donna is a, also living in Sandy Utah four blocks from Rodney. Her husband is involved in some big industrial firm on the finance end of it and she graduated as a, received a degree in registered nursing and also a BS degree in child care I think it was from Brigham Young University. She was, during her senior year in high school in 1968 she was, she won the competition of Idaho Junior Miss and went to the national competition representing Idaho.

HF: Oh, that's wonderful.

TM: She was also the runner up to the Belle of the "Y" I guess it's a Brigham Young University so she's had some you know some real choice experiences in those, that kind of activity.

HF: How many grandchildren you have?

TM: Right now I have eight grandchildren nine of them coming up.

HF: Oh, isn't that great. And it's a joy I'm sure to have them come home.

TM: Right and I also to have them leave. Maybe you better take that out.

HF: You know Tom, you're in demand as a public speaker. A, how'd that come to be, a, how has that developed? Can you share some highlights?

TM: Well, a, I'll share you some lowlights. You know I can remember when I had my eyesight that was the most frightful experiences to stand before a group and talk. In fact it's so frightful that [my] mind would go blank and I couldn't say a thing and naturally I just hated public speaking. I can remember I just about flunked a speech class because I didn't want to get in front of the group, class group to talk, see. But after the loss of my eyesight then people asked me you know how does it feel to be blind, what is your experience about blindness. Then I start to telling them about it naturally they were interested and it seems like that and especially in the, in the religious area how did religion relate to your overcoming the down feeling, the depression that you had during your blindness, of your blindness, and naturally those things I told and the answer was kind of a spiritual uplift and from mouth to ear my telling this story came in demand to the extent that I was talking maybe two or three times a month and from there it expanded to other areas of speaking. I have spoken at commencement exercises, a, nearly in all parts in the state of Idaho. Last summer I was asked to be the keynote speaker at the National Federation of High School Activities Association that held their convention in Hawaii. And according to Dick Stickle who is the representative in the

state of Idaho I'm the first individual that has ever been chosen to speak at this, this convention, organization from the state of Idaho as a native born Idahoan and that's quite a privilege for me and I, it was a choice experience for me to talk to that group of people.

HF: Well that was a highlight there, wasn't it?

TM: Yes it was.

HF: Tremendous.

TM: I think there's about a thousand delegates there, great big convention hall and my son and my wife was with me and my son looked at the convention hall and he says, "I wouldn't speak in that hall for a million dollars." The vastness of it you know is a—

HF: That's tremendous. Well and will you please tell me what, what theme have you tried to promote, promote generally in your public speaking?

TM: Usually it's, um, a, I think there's three aspects of it, probably number one is how important religion is in your life in reference to the challenges that are brought before you that religion plays a vital part, part in giving you that, a, inner conviction, that courage to rise above whatever problems, whatever challenges that are before you. The second area that I express in my talk is, a, how grateful we should be that we live in this country. No where in the world can an individual receive the kind of opportunities to develop the independence of, of living in the home, of raising your family, and all the joys and blessings that comes from it without the fear of someone invading your home and destroying all those things that you've dreamed and that you have made a reality. And thirdly that the horizon is still open and broad for you, and that whatever you want you can still have. In other words, with the philosophy that, that your place in life depends upon the ten important two letter words, "if it is to be it is up to me."

HF: Tom you know I, I have noted in this interview today there's been an overflowing of positive-ness that has come across to me, positive-ness of character, of accomplishment, of looking ahead. And I suppose that if I was to ask you if you would like to live another 25 or 30 years maybe to get to be a 100 that would be an aspiration.

TM: Yeah, I would really like to see that if my health is good, my mind is keen, and I'm aware of what's around me you know, if I can have that kind of a blessing I'd like to live another 25 or 30 years.

HF: Do you have a lot yet to accomplish?

TM: I have a lot to do. I have too much to do.

HF: That's great. I've appreciated the opportunity of being here with you today.