

## **GRANT MASASHI UJIFUSA**

Extended conversation after the formal videotaping

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*This transcript expands from the video due to additional conversations*

This is **Laine Bailey DeFreece** on June 2, 2023, at 9:45 am Mountain Time here in Denver, and 11:45 am in Philadelphia for you. Thank you for agreeing to be recorded for the oral history collection of the Washakie Museum and Cultural Center in Worland, Wyoming. What is your full name?

**Grant Ujifusa:** Yes, my name is Grant Masashi Ujifusa.

**Laine:** Was there a nickname that you were known by, either an inside family name or one inside the community?

**Grant:** Masa was the short for Masashi inside our family. And I was also called Masa among members of the Ujifusa extended family and the Japanese community around Worland.

**Laine:** And we stated, you are currently living in Philadelphia.

**Grant:** My wife Amy and I have been here for about two years. Our son Steven, a writer, and his wife, Alexandra, a pediatric ER physician, and their two sons, Isaac, 5, and Max, 3, live in Philadelphia. So we sold our home in Chappaqua, New York, and moved to Philadelphia, to be near our son, his wife, and our grandsons. But I have to say I miss living in Chappaqua and seeing friends in Manhattan. In short, I love NY, but Philadelphia, the city, not as much.

## **UJIFUSAS MOVED NEAR WORLAND IN 1906**

**Laine:** We're very interested in your family history and how the Ujifusa family, like several families of our classmates, go back several generations in Worland. We're curious about when the first generation of your family arrived in Worland and what was the decision-making process that they went through to locate in Worland?

## Worland's War Babies Grow Up: 1941-1960

**Grant:** Well, my grandfather landed in San Francisco in 1904, and found himself doing stoop labor thinning beets north of Denver in 1905. And the next year he was working as a laborer on Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, the CB&Q. He was among the group of perhaps 100 Japanese men who brought the train tracks in on the wrong side of the river in 1906. And then the men went on to build the tracks through Thermopolis and through the canyon, which was really tough work, and beyond, for about 7 years. From 1906 to 1913, he was living the life of a bachelor in a boxcar near Rairden, Wyoming, which is just south of Manderson. There's still evidence of a siding where the boxcars were once stood, lined up.

By 1913, he had saved up enough money to bring my grandmother over to the United States. He met her in Seattle where she landed and together they lived in a boxcar as he continued to work on the railroad. My father, delivered by my grandfather, was born in that boxcar in 1914. And at points when Grandpa wasn't working on the railroad and at night, he had a little farming operation not far from the Big Horn River near Rairden. And then he heard that some company from Iowa or Fort Collins was going to dig the Hanover Canal. And so he decided that rather than going back to California, where the land was all taken up, he would use shovels and a level pulled by horses to create new flat ag land out of the badland ravines and sagebrush about a mile from the same Big Horn River from which water was diverted about seven or eight miles south of Worland. The once new ag land is where our present farm is located on Washakie 10 about six miles north of Worland.

Grandpa did rather well, and by 1920, he had built a nice traditional farmhouse, white and trimmed in green. I was born in 1942, and that was the house, after it was refurbished and indoor plumbing was installed in 1953, my sister Susan and I grew up in.

We lived in a three-generation typical Japanese family. Not Mom, Dad, and the kids – the American and European nuclear family -- but Grandpa, Grandma, oldest son, his wife, and the grandchildren. Not just our family, of peasant origin, but of families of that had higher status than ours back in Japan.

When construction on the railroad was completed, Grandpa's buddies with whom he had worked decided they were going to not stay in a part of the world that was physically barren, very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. And they went back to California, if not to Japan itself. They thought my grandfather was crazy for staying in Wyoming after the railroad work was done. But he wanted his own farm and he knew – he was a pretty smart guy – that a canal was going to be dug.

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And so, he staked out a farm backed by the Muirhead family, a local banking family that used to own what was called the Stockgrowers State Bank. Our family owes a lot to the George Muirhead family, who are still in Wyoming banking based out of Basin with a branch in Worland. Later in the late 1920s and in the 1930s, George Muirhead also backed my grandfather's decision to raise cattle on the open range south of Worland around Neiber. Paul Horel came up to me said one of the nicest thing ever said about our family while I was lunching with Martha Healy at the retirement home in the early 2000s. Paul said that his father also ran open range cattle south of town, and his father said to him, "You know that Japanese man out there with us once. Pretty good little wrangler, ridin' and ropin'." In old Japan, only the upper order, not the lower order, of the samurai class was allowed near a horse.

On December 1, 1940, in a semi-arranged marriage, my father married my mother, Mary Okugawa, who came to live from her home in southeastern Colorado where there was a notable Japanese American community into what was then regarded as the wilds of Wyoming where there was not.

So that was how we got to the Big Horn Basin, and that's why I grew up in Worland, because my grandfather was initially a laborer who brought the tracks into town and decided to stay.

**Laine:** And what was the process going from a railroad to a farmer when he was so unfamiliar with the soil and the weather? And did he know the principles?

**Grant:** Well, there are a number of other farmers who were already established from whom Grandpa learned the not especially complicated ways of raising sugar beets and alfalfa. He learned how to read and write English thanks to a wonderful schoolteacher named Helen Coburn Howell, a legendary figure in town. That meant he could read contracts, do banking and other aspects of running a farming operation. [Note: Read Joanne Culbertson Jeffres story for more about Helen Coburn Howell, who came to Worland from Iowa with Joanne's great-aunt, Mary Culbertson to homestead.]

And it's not as if it required very much know-how or experience to farm around Worland. There are local farmers who could tell him, this is when you plow, this is when you plant the beet seeds, this is when you irrigate them. It didn't require, you know, much book learning to pick up local ways of farming, some of which are still observed actually.

That's how we got to Worland and that's how mom got to Worland. She married into the family in 1940. And I came along on January 4, 1942, and grew up on Grandpa's farm.

**Laine:** And what are some of your memories of growing up on the farm?

**Grant:** Mostly positive. Some years, you know, were tougher than others, when the crops didn't quite turn out the way we wanted them to or when the prices and the weather were not good.

### **Bi-Cultural: Traditional Japanese on the Farm; Traditional Worland in Town**

Probably the most important one of the things that appears on this and in other oral interviews I've done was that my life inside our family was very Japanese because my mother was fluent in Japanese, written and spoken. She had attended Japanese school three months of the year for 12 years in Colorado and went to ordinary public school for nine months. So for 12 years, she spent 12 months of the year in school. A diligent and often a brilliant young student.

So when she came into my father's family, she was fluent in spoken Japanese and talked to Grandma and Grandpa in Japanese. So until I was seven or eight, I was completely bilingual because Japanese was the household language.

I've lost it now. But my early life was one in which every dinner or what was then called supper, we would have rice. So seven days a week, I'd have rice for supper -- an indication of the extent to which I was "Japanese." And then there was my life outside of family in Worland in which I was an ordinary "white kid" going to the local schools.

Some of my best memories of growing up were those involving my good friends through the eighth grade -- Paul Engleman and the McNutt brothers, Walter and Bill. And they would come out to the farm and we would have a very fine time swimming in the canal not far from the house and doing other things equally non-productive and imaginative like having clod fights. We had a lot of fun on the farm.

### **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: CUB SCOUTS, CHURCH, 4-H BEEF**

**Grant:** Then there were lots of activities in which my mother insisted I take part in, including Cub Scouts, for example. I have very good memories of Cub Scout meetings in Dennis Bower's mother's basement. And later, Dean Frederick's mother was also a den mother with my mother.

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So that was an early activity. And then one summer, the local Methodist Church wanted to do outreach to the local Japanese families. And they brought in a minister, Danny Shudo, from Chicago who was Japanese. This outreach program did not succeed with any other family except ours. And so we were brought into the Methodist church, about which I have mixed memories. But one of the important things that happened during my experience in church was that I became acquainted with some of the essential and defining stories of Western civilization, which include, of course, Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, David vs. Goliath, the birth of Jesus, the story of the Resurrection, which are among the defining and fundamental narratives of Western culture, which if you, raised in our household and did not attend a Christian church in town, you would be unfamiliar. So I became grounded in some of the essential narratives of Western civilization under the auspices of the local Methodist church without which I would have been ignorant.

I think it's hard for people who are not acquainted with the Christian tradition, plus the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and so on, to have a sense of what's going on in American life without an understanding of the narrative story of Western civilization. These became second nature to me, which was important for the development of my personal, social, and academic life. So I'm grateful to my mother for insisting I become part of any healthy organized activity there was in Worland.

So I was, for example, also a five-year member of the Durkee 4-H Club. I raised one or two Hereford or Angus steers over the course of six or seven months. These very large animals became fully domesticated pets really, ones you would lead around at the local county fair in July. So this was an agricultural experience with a group of kids who were led by Ben and Harry Strauch, and who though they were busy farmers, committed themselves to teaching us how to raise beef cattle and raise various crops common around Worland. I remain very grateful to them. I enjoyed that experience with fellow Club members, including classmate Max Ogg and his older brother Tom Ogg.

### **IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II: GRANDFATHER'S INVOLVEMENT WITH HEART MOUNTAIN**

**Laine:** Well, Grant, before we move on to your high school experience, as a small child, was your family affected at all by World War II and the after effects of it in society?

**Grant:** The answer is no, for the most part. The exclusion, as the correct term now has it, of Japanese Americans during the war occurred within a 125-mile line drawn from the Pacific Coast inland. And if you lived within 125 miles of the Pacific Ocean, you were sent to camp. This

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encompassed 97% of all Japanese Americans. In Worland, we were a thousand miles from the Pacific, and not regarded as potential spies and saboteurs of military installations on the Coast. Accordingly, we did not suffer the terrible material and psychological damage that was done to Japanese-Americans who were suddenly uprooted from their lives, their work, their schools, and who in some cases were separated from their families for long periods of time.

In fact, as you know, there was a Japanese-American internment camp set up between Cody and Powell called Heart Mountain, and my grandfather during the winter when he was not working the farm, would drive to Heart Mountain and be waved in by the guards and waved out, even though he was racially no different from people imprisoned in the camp. He found himself for the first time in 40 years among fellow Japanese. He became quite involved -- he had very strong opinions about many things -- in some of the disputes at Heart Mountain, which included, famously, the decision whether or not Japanese American boys should volunteer out of the camps for something called the 442nd Regiment Combat Team, which was a famous group of Japanese-American soldiers who fought in Italy and France, and completely distinguished themselves. They were responsible in large part for the inclusion in the American mainstream of Japanese Americans after World War II and later for the success of Japanese American redress.

In any case, Grandpa, after milking two cows in the morning, would hop into his car and drive maybe 65 miles to Heart Mountain and enjoy the company there of the Japanese community members -- a community from which he had lived apart for 40 years. And then around four in the afternoon, he'd look at his watch and say, "Well, I gotta go home now and to milk again." And he'd leave.

Grandpa once said to me later that I had to be careful in life because I came from a very stupid family. And I asked him why he would say such a thing. "Because, Masa, I voluntarily chose to settle a part of the world to which 11,000 people were involuntarily removed."

During the camp years, Grandpa's life was summed up by the Islamic saying: If you wait long enough, the Mountain will come to Muhammad. And it did. Here Grandpa was 1,000 miles inland, and history would have it that 11,000 Japanese Americans would land virtually on his doorstep. But we were not directly affected by the exclusion and the dispossession of Japanese-Americans on the West Coast during the war. In fact, that's why we still have our farm. If we had been affected, we would have lost it. And the fact is that we didn't. I own the whole farm now, house and land, and I'm very happy to have both.

**Laine:** So you grew up at a young age knowing about the internment camp?

**Grant:** I did because there were Japanese-American men who were given leave from the camp to work on our family's beet crop. There may have been eight or 10 of them, mostly from Washington state, and they would live with us in our house. We needed labor to harvest the sugar beets, and they came to work for us. I remember one man in particular named Joe Furuta from Tacoma, and I grew very fond of him. And in fact, he was probably the first person outside of family about whom I can remember saying to myself, "I really like this man, I like to be around him." Joe Furuta would carry me around on his back.

And we had a very nice time of it. I completely lost touch with him after Heart Mountain was closed, but he was once one of my favorite people. And he's one reason I got involved in redress because I felt I owed it to Joe.

## **HIGH SCHOOL: QUARTERBACK OF 1959 STATE CHAMPION FOOTBALL TEAM and BOYS STATE GOVERNOR**

**Laine:** Going on to secondary school, you were involved and achieved so much academically, athletically, in school leadership, and community leadership. What are some of the memories you have about this? There's so much, I know, in your mind, but are there any special memories that stand out to you as you reflect back on those years?

**Grant:** Well, I don't know about my leadership. I was a complete failure as freshman class president, not being able to construct a proper float for the home coming parade.

**Laine:** But we got that float done.

**Grant:** I just really loved playing high school football, so that was something I devoted myself to. I am still grateful to my teammates on the Warrior 1959 State Championship team; actually the number one team in the state that year. The last poll taken occurred before the Class A playoffs began. In that poll, Star Valley was ranked number one because it had beaten Laramie ranked number two. But in a playoff game, we beat Star Valley 24 to 6. My teammates included seniors Sonny Shearer, Dick Yingling, Loren Laird, Gerald Cook, Jim Storer, Larry Kitchel, Dean Frederick, Jack Iversen, and Chester Pearce. The juniors included Kenny Chastain, Lloyd Snyder, Larry Coggins, Jerry Hastings, Eddie Francke, Duane Groshart, and Dennis Clymore.

Academically, I was expected by my mother to do well. I think you can sum up my experience in high school in two ways. Number one, I was not as smart as Ricky Hake and number two I was not as good an athlete as Sonny Shearer. So I finished second in two important dimensions in my high school life. But I enjoyed high school, and thanks to attending Boy State, I learned that someone from the wilds of Wyoming could, even though you're not as smart as Ricky Hake, be admitted to Harvard. That's because there was and still is something called geographical distribution. And in those days, if you were Asian, you were considered a desirable minority, not an over-represented racial group.

Harvard is now 30% Asian. But in my day, there were only eight Asians in a class of 1,600. So I was an unusual ethnic kid from the wilds of Wyoming.

Frank O'Mahoney, who coached us on how to stand out at Boys State, was the person behind my success at the gathering. I was elected governor of Boy State, which meant I became a delegate to Boys Nation in Washington. And I learned there that were these schools that other kids were going to visit while they were back East, including Brown and Dartmouth and others. And I asked them, "Well, what are these schools?" And they said, "Well, these are very prestigious schools which we might attend." And I said to them, "How could they be so prestigious when I've never heard of their football teams?"

But when I wrote back to these colleges for information, I was smart enough to discern that I was one of the kids out in the Wild West they wanted for their understanding of what diversity was. Because in 1960, 55% of the kids who attended Harvard were the preppies from elite prep schools like St. Paul, Exeter, and so on. Harvard wanted someone like me to show up and add a kind of downscale balance to a hugely upscale student population.

**Laine:** And going to Harvard was an important part of your life.

**Grant:** It became a crucially important part of my life.

## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: ROCKET STARS IN THE FAMOUS *SATURDAY EVENING POST***

**Laine:** Grant, I remember a year that a *Saturday Evening Post* photographer came to Worland and you went out in the badlands with Mr. Swartz, Larry Swing, and Ricky Hake to launch rockets. Tell me about what your project and how you became featured in the centerfold of a big national magazine. [Note: With a circulation of 6.5 million.]



**Grant:** While driving home in my ancient car, I heard on the radio that some kids in Utah had been shooting off rockets. And so I said to myself, "Well, we can do that around Worland." I then asked Mr. Swartz whether he would order zinc powder, which combined in granular form with sulfur that we could get from the remnants of a pile of it at the old sulfur plant would create a mix, which if ignited, was rather powerful rocket fuel. And we could make what local people in Worland thought was science into what was really a large and powerful Roman candle. A giant firecracker, in other words.

There was very little science to it, actually, but it was a lot of fun. Ricky Hake who later went to Caltech and became an honest-to-God rocket scientist, and Larry Swing, whose father welded together a vertical platform from which our rockets were launched, were two members of the project. People in town thought we were young scientists, but we were not. One thing our Roman candles could do was make a lot of noise and create a powerful visual effect of the sort that could be captured in a magazine photo. It was great fun.

There was a point in the United States which these rockets are going up and they were injuring kids and landing on people's houses. And authorities around the country decided that they want to put a stop to the activity. So they asked companies that supplied high school chemistry classes not to ship sulfur and zinc. Well, we had the sulfur ten miles north of town at the old sulfur plant. Roy Swartz, to get the zinc that we needed, would order the following for his chemistry class: 100 Erlenmeyer flasks, four gallons of distilled water and a list of about 20 other items. Buried in the middle of the list was a request for 20 pounds of zinc powder. The supplier shipped Roy Swartz everything he ordered, overlooking the banned zinc buried in his long list. The trick got us the banned zinc.

I had a very good relationship with Roy Swartz, who was considered an eccentric, and he was. He also played favorites, and I was one of them. [Note: See Loren Laird's story.] And Rick had the same relationship with math teacher David McDonald, another really fine person. So Roy and David were our sponsors and created a kind of adult cover for what we were doing, which was shooting off giant and noisy Roman candles.

**Laine:** And how did the *Post* even find out about this group and make the decision to come to Worland?

**Grant:** There was a photographer for the *Saturday Evening Post*, which in fact, was based not far from where I now sit in Philadelphia. It was a mass circulation magazine for middle America. This fellow, Yern Gertz was a *Saturday Evening Post* photographer based in Salt Lake City. A

story ran about what we were doing in the Worland paper that got picked up by the AP. In fact, the story also mentioned on ABC television on their 6:30 pm national newscast with Douglas Edwards. Gertz heard about us by reading the AP story in a Salt Lake newspaper and made a call to -- I guess it was to Mr. Swartz -- and said "I'd like to come up and take photos of what you're doing." Gertz gave me \$200 to cover the expenses of the launch. I also named the rocket Diana after the Greek goddess and a certain young woman who attended the local high school

We had any number of failures before the photographer came to Worland. Many in town watched our rockets explode in a spectacular way, which was in some ways more fun to see than having them shoot up into the sky. Mr. Swartz came up with a clever design for the little engine at the bottom of the rocket pictured in the magazine. It was composed of four pipe fittings welded and screwed together, and the whole assembly was then screwed into the bottom of a little, four-foot rocket. It shouldn't have worked. Although Mr. Swartz was a very smart man, his rocket engine had no propulsive engineering basis in its design, but it worked. So rocketeering was a notable high school experience.

So when you say, "Well, it's not rocket science." Our project was not rocket science. But Rick Hake became a rocket scientist in real life and worked on the nation's anti-ballistic missile system, making real rocket science his life's work. After Rick and I came home from college at Christmas, we would go out on the badlands and try to replicate on a small scale what we've done earlier as high school kids. All of it was fun, more fun than real science in a high school classroom.

## **OTHERS WHO MADE BIG IMPACTS ON YOUR LIFE**

**Laine:** Grant, you've been very generous with your accrediting the people of Worland and your family, teachers and such, which guiding you, you know, through the early years of, Is there anybody else in Worland as you look back that you would honor for the contributions that they've made in your growing up years?

**Grant:** Okay. My second-grade teacher, Ms. Crist, taught me how to add and subtract numbers that included three and four digits. For that, I developed a deep crush on Ms. Crist, but wouldn't you know it, that very year she went off and married somebody else.

I also owe Charlotte Young, a junior high school teacher, a lot because she ignited my interest in American history and American politics. Also Joe Kinlein, who was a math teacher and my junior high school football coach. He taught me that you're never as bad as you think you are when you fail and you're never as good as you are when you think you've succeeded.

And I also owe a lot to Cathy Healy's parents. They introduced me to an understanding of life that was -- how should I say it -- beyond what was encompassed by Worland. Dan had gone to Wharton School in Philadelphia, a big Ivy League school. Martha had gone to Cornell, and both gave me a sense of how that sort of understanding of things that would later become part of my understanding of life. I spent a lot of time, as Cathy knows, at their house, enjoying their company and arguing with Dan and mostly losing. It was a very important formative experience for me.

I am also indebted also to the coaches of our championship football team in 1959 one of whom saw me late at night on C-SPAN. I was on, who knows, at three in the morning. There were four people watching: My mother, two people in Wisconsin, and Coach Clarence Daniels, who tracked me down and called me. He said, "Grant, we had a great championship season. You know, you never made a mental mistake, but Coach Hewgley and I never thought much of your physical skills." What I wanted to say but didn't was, "Coach, it's been 40 years. Love me for my body."

## **LEARN TO WIN – HOW THE IMPOSSIBLE GOAL OF REDRESS BECAME A REALITY**

**Grant:** It's important, I think, in life, not only to know how to lose, but to know how to win. And my football coaches helped me come to that understanding of things, which has served me well. So when, for example, I decided to become part of the Japanese American redress effort, I was in it to win. The odds looked very long, but I was in it to win. And one of the deficiencies, I think, of Japanese culture, is a tendency to place too much emphasis on what others might think and is therefore very risk adverse. So when I came into doing redress, the elected establishment of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), which is our national civil rights organization like the NAACP is for Blacks, the national leadership didn't know what to make of me. I seemed way too aggressive for them.

**Laine:** Back up for a moment for our viewers who don't know what redress could you explain that? And then I think we'll understand your story better.

**Grant:** Okay. This was a movement that began in the summer of 1976 and lasted until August 10, 1988, when Ronald Reagan signed the legislation we had been advocating. It was called the Japanese-American Redress Movement, as we petitioned redress of grievances to the federal government for our incarceration during World War II. We wanted an apology and \$20,000 for everybody who went to a camp, including little babies and children who were sent to one with their parents.

It was a successful movement that reversed after a fashion what happened during World War II. What happened, for example, led to the construction of Heart Mountain. So we said, to the federal government – to Congress and to the President – that you owe us an apology for what happened and you also owe us money for what happened.

Some elders of the Japanese American Citizens League asked me to lead the effort to make redress happen, because I was the founding editor of *The Almanac of American Politics*, a book that was an exhaustive guide to Members of Congress. The book gave me access to anyone in Washington to advance our cause.

**Laine:** And this was a national effort.

**Grant:** Yes. Most Japanese Americans lived on the West Coast. So a lot of the activity was on the West Coast, but you needed the support of 218 members of the House -- a majority in that body -- from all over the country and we initially thought 60 senators – a filibuster-proof majority -- from all over the country could make it happen. And we had to convince Ronald Reagan, who had publicly opposed the bill for two years, to sign the legislation. So all this happened in for me between 1981 and 1988. And I would say the experience was more exhilarating than beating Douglas in the 1959 state championship football game. So it was the most important thing I did in life. And I was happy to have done it.

### **Grant Knew the Detailed Background About Every Member of Congress**

I was asked because for many years I co-authored a book called the *Almanac of American Politics*, which I'll say both Tim Russert and George Will call the "Bible of American Politics." It was well-known inside the Beltway, everybody had it -- all the people in the White House, all the senators and congressmen and their staffers, plus everybody in the various bureaucracies, law firms, political consultancies and polling firms. And what this book did was take every congressional district of every state and using numbers and words to describe what, for example, the 3rd District of Minnesota was like, and why people voted the way they did there, and why, in most cases, the congressman from the 3rd District of Minnesota voted the way he

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did and behaved the way he did. So we put all 435 of these districts in the 50 states, the 100 senators in the 50 states and the 50 governors in the 50 states in one book that was published every two years. The first one came out in 1972.

**Laine:** I'm going to get a copy of the book to show on the screen. So go ahead, Grant.

**Grant:** So what *The Almanac* did was give me access to anybody I wanted in Washington. And in a way, not entirely cricket, was by my very presence in a meeting suggested I was trying to convince a member of Congress to vote for the bill knowing his write-up in the next edition of the book might not be as favorable as he would want, should he not vote for the bill I was pushing. That was not using my "press credentials" in an entirely legitimate way, but I didn't care.

In any case, this was an effort that required all six numbers on a lotto ticket. We had to have every one of those numbers, and as it turned out, we got all six, including and Reagan's change of mind when he decided to sign the bill on August 10, 1988.

I'll tell you a quick story of why he changed his mind. S.I. Hayakawa, a conservative senator from California and his friend Ed Meese, the attorney general who was in charge of the issue for the Reagan Administration at the Justice Department, really didn't like our bill, hated it in fact. And Hayakawa had convinced the president that the only people who wanted this were street radicals on the left holding rallies seen on local California television.

Hayakawa had pulled a microphone plug on like-minded students protesting the Vietnam War at San Francisco State during the campus riots of the 1960s. I said the radicals wanted redress, but most advocates of redress were ordinary middle class Japanese Americans – teachers, pharmacists, farmers, nurses, and mostly importantly veterans of the 442 Regimental Combat Team.

How to get that word into the White House? We knew that on August 10, 1944, Kaz Masuda, a soldier in the 442nd, was killed in action on the banks of the Arno River in Italy, and was to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. He had said to his sister that if anything happened to him he wanted to be buried in his hometown cemetery in Fountain Valley, California. When his sister made a trip from an internment camp to Fountain Valley to make arrangements for her brother, the town fathers said, "We don't bury Japs in our cemetery." Somehow Vinegar Joe Stilwell heard about what happened, and went to Fountain Valley and confronted the town fathers who backed down. The general said he was going have two ceremonies, one at the Hollywood Bowl and one at the Masuda Farm, which somehow stayed in their family's hands.

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He made a very big deal of this presentation of the Distinguished Service Cross. And one of the persons invited to make remarks that the farmhouse ceremony was a 26-year-old movie star named Ronald Reagan.

We got Kaz's sister to write a letter to the president about his speaking at the farm house ceremony for Kaz, and I wrote a letter saying redress was supported by middle-class Japanese Americans and by veterans of the 442. By utter coincidence, I was then working on a book with Tom Kean, the Republican governor of New Jersey. And Tom lobbied Reagan personally when Reagan came up to campaign for Republican state legislators in the fall of 1987. And so we got word into Reagan through Tom who sent my letter, Kaz's sister's letter and his own letter to Reagan in something call The Pouch, so-called, which was a direct line of access into Reagan available all Republican governors. And Reagan's response: "I remember that ceremony at the farmhouse and I'm changing my mind on this and overruling Ed Meese." And so we got a signature after two or three years of public opposition from the Reagan administration. It was a profound experience for me, even more memorable, I have to say, than winning the state championship in Douglas in 1959.

**Laine:** And one of your classmates was the beneficiary of all this success of the redress, I was thinking --

**Grant:** Tom Fujikawa. Yeah. Another beneficiary was classmate Decker Nomura.

**Laine:** And Decker, who moved with his mother and his brother Ron to Kirby to live with relatives and so didn't go to camp. Tom definitely didn't go camp. [Note: See Tom Fujikawa's interview.]

**Grant:** Yeah, and Decker and his older brother Ron. All of them as "voluntary evacuees" who came to live with relatives who live inland and who as a result didn't have to go to camp. The evacuees were also eligible for redress payments.

**Laine:** Oh, Ron also?

**Grant:** Yeah. I think also the Tanaka sisters were beneficiaries. The Tanakas were in some ways a hidden family. Some of the sisters were cheerleaders – Mickey was in our class. I think they were in one of the camps, maybe Heart Mountain, but they ended up on Washakie 10 in circumstances that were not the best. And I think those circumstances were the direct result of their father and mother being sent to camp.

**Laine:** Well, many, many grateful people, Grant.

**Grant:** It was something that I was proud to do and happy to do, making many, many very good friends along the way. But I have to say, after the success of redress, I said, "Well, that was that part of my life and walked away from it." And then Cathy helped to convince me to reclaim my place in the history of redress and then had a hand in helping me do it. So maybe 15 years after having left the effort and not having done anything to say that this is how it happened, I found myself written out of the story. So I spent some years with Cathy's help and others telling the story. The thing that I could bring to the story was a kind of granularity, as the phrase now has it. I can name specific dates, people, how, when, and where much of redress happened. And some of the others perhaps would say, well, we wrote letters to Congressmen and did street demonstrations, and we won. That's not at all how it happened. But anyway, I am happy to say that my part in the history of redress has been reconstituted.

Laine: And you certainly have. Cathy and I went to the ceremony in New York when you were knighted in the Emperor's Order of the Rising Sun for your work on redress. I've never felt so proud of you as that evening when you spoke so powerfully about the others who had died who deserved the honor. I couldn't help crying when I thought about how fulfilled your parents would have been to be there with Amy and your sons. Your mother was my 4-H club leader for years. We spent lots of time sewing for the county fair at your house.

**Consulate General of Japan in New York: Grant Ujifusa [Awarded Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, 26 January 2012](#). Grant's [acceptance speech](#), crediting the six others (only one living) who also deserved the award.**

**Laine:** Through this experience, you've seen the very best of human nature and some that wasn't.

**Grant:** One of the great things about growing up in Worland is that you think the best of people. And that experience of that understanding of life was conveyed to you from the people of Worland. This was very important to me. When human beings exhibited traits that were not exactly the most admirable was maybe something we had to learn after we left Worland. Our hometown was a protected, even idyllic, place in which to grow up.

As Ruth Bower once said to me, "Of course, Worland is the center of my universe. I mean, what else is there in my life?" And that was one way of putting our experience growing up there. It was in important ways a lovely and fiercely protective cocoon created by our parents who were especially determined to give their children the best that they knew how. And I'm very grateful

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to those parents. We had some great ones in our time, including your parents and Joan's parents among others who created a community for their kids, a kind of community perhaps not found in many other places.

**Laine:** Well, they certainly did enrich our lives through their involvement and caring about their children. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about and we'll give you that opportunity and then we'll go back to Cathy because she may have some questions for you.

**Grant:** No, no, I can't think of anything. I will say, however, about my experience growing up in Worland and my gratitude toward our parents. A Buddhist priest once said -- in a ceremony in our house, actually -- he said, "Where there is gratitude, there also is civilization." And I'm accordingly grateful to the parents to give us the chances in life that they did.

**Laine:** You had wise guidance and caring, very caring, loving guidance too.

**Grant:** Yes, I think I was extremely fortunate in all kinds of ways, in ways that perhaps don't exist today in small-town America, not speak of large metro areas. Life for children has been degraded in ways that we all know about.

**Laine:** But you made a difference, Grant.

**Grant:** Oh, well, I don't know about that,

**Laine:** You used what you had been taught and extended it.

**Grant:** Yeah. Like everybody else, I had some difficult periods in life. But one of the important truisms about life in the world is: It doesn't matter if you get bucked off. It matters if you get back on the horse. And this was one understanding of my life that I absorbed from the white culture in the world. The Japanese culture, when you get bucked off, it's very shameful. And that is one of the deficiencies, I think, of Japanese culture: too much shame about what other people might think and not enough personal guilt (and pride) and a clear sense of personal autonomy for what happens in your life. But that's a whole different discussion that we won't get into.

**Laine:** Cathy, what questions do you have for Grant?



## **JOBS: MUST MILK THE COW TWICE A DAY, 365 DAYS A YEAR**

**Cathy:** I only have a few. Grant, we've been doing these interviews and we've talked to a number of kids who were raised on farms. They talk about getting up before dawn and doing all the chores before school and then come home right away after school to do more chores, which they'd finish just in time for dinner. It sounds like your mother made sure you were in town doing town kid things. I wonder if you could talk about how your parents as farm parents were able to make do without you doing chores or were you doing those chores and the town things?

**Grant:** That's an interesting question. And an "important one.

In the morning, I did my share of chores. In particular, my grandfather thought it was good for me to milk a cow, twice a day, every day, because a cow doesn't celebrate Christmas or Thanksgiving. And so, in the morning, before going to school, I milked a cow, I got ready for school, and then got on the bus. Later, I had an old Chevy that I would drive into town. And sometimes I didn't want to go through the bother of changing my shoes between milking and getting into my school shoes, and I would just tiptoe through the tulips in my school shoes, milk the cow, and tiptoe back to house. One morning, somebody saw me in sitting in class and said, "Well, you think you're so classroom smart, but have you looked at the soles of your shoes?" And there was more than a little bit of manure on them, mostly lodged between heel and sole. But I didn't work on the farm as hard as many farm kids. My parents wanted me to take full advantage of the extracurricular activities the school had to offer.

So someone like Larry Swing worked very hard on his father's farm. Others I knew did the same. In fact, some were kept out of school altogether to help with the beet harvest. But this was something my parents would never allow if I were do well in school and make good grades -- not something my mother, in particular, would ever let happen.

I sometimes feel guilty about it. But I did work pretty hard during the summer, and achieved my manhood, when my grandfather saw that I had stacked hay in a near perfect solid square. My father ran hay in a lift attached to tractor and dumped the hay on top, and my job was to pitch the hay around and stomp on it so that it would become a perfectly square, compact haystack. I think when I was 13 or 14, I'd done this for my father and then later for a neighbor for a dollar and a quarter an hour, I stacked baled hay and achieved easier to get square-ness.

And when Grandpa saw that I could stack loose hay in a perfectly three dimensionally square fashion, he said that I had achieved manhood. Those days on top of the haystack were hard ones, but I was not expected to do anything that would sacrifice my academic work or my extracurricular activities in the local high school during the school year. But thank you for asking that question, Cathy. I had never really given it any thought.

**Cathy:** If you had listened to all 20 of these interviews, you would have given it many thoughts. You know Grant, we live in cities where kids get into summer programs that cost their parents or are funded by taxpayers or they have unpaid internships. We all had paid jobs. All of us. Boys on farms didn't seem to get paid at home but got good wages for driving the school buses. Cathy Salzman [Gotfredson] got paid for cowboying for neighbors out of Ten Sleep.

## **REDRESS AND REAGAN: BLOOD ON THE (WAR) BEACHES IS THE SAME COLOR**

**Cathy:** Going back to Kaz Masuda. The part of the story that chokes me up is what Ronald Reagan, the 26-year-old actor said at the funeral.

**Grant:** He said, "In this country, we're all Americans. And it doesn't matter what color you are. And so we're here to honor one of our own." And Stilwell said, "Well, look, you know, Sunshine Patriots who say how much they love America. Did they die for their country and for its ideals like Kaz Masuda? No, they simply said, 'We don't want Japs buried in our cemetery.'" Vinegar Joe Stilwell, in his remarks, did not say it quite as strongly as that, but as we're here together, we have to ask ourselves, Who is the most patriotic Americans among us. They were not the town fathers.

And this was, I think, a slap at the town fathers who had initially refused Kaz's sister's request to have her brother Kaz to be buried in the local cemetery. It'd be terrible, wouldn't it, if Tommy Fujikawa or Decker Nomura were subject to the same decision, and someone at our courthouse said, "We're not going bury Tommy Fujikawa in our cemetery, because he's a Jap." Well, this is what happened, a marker of the depth of bigotry on the West Coast from the time the Japanese Americans first arrived in San Francisco in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century until after World War II.

**Cathy:** Did Reagan say something about we all bleed red blood? Do I remember that falsely?

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**Grant:** Yeah, you're right. He said, "The blood that is soaked into the sands of beaches is all one color."

**Cathy:** Thank you. Those are all my questions. Joan, do you have any questions?

**Grant:** Amy and I had a very nice lunch with Joan not long ago.

**Cathy:** That's what I heard. I've got to come up there [to Philadelphia from DC.] and we can all get together – Worland East.

**Grant:** Joan is known by my mother and others who knew her in Denver as a person with the kindest heart you can imagine. She's been that way all of her life. She's really a treasure.

## **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – 1947 – 1954 > WHERE DID YOUR FRIENDS LIVE?**

**Joan Walseth Purcell:** Going back to elementary school. Those of us who lived in town tended to associate more with kids within our neighborhood. But for kids who lived on the farm, did you meet your friends through activities like Cub Scouts and 4-H and school. or did you associate with kids within your geographic area around where you lived?

**Grant:** It's an interesting question. Again, something I never thought of. No, not really. I had my best friends in elementary school, Paul Engelman and the McNutt brothers, who were town kids. And then later, Lowell Peterson and Bill Day were town kids. Larry Swing was a partner in the rocket project, but he was an FFA [Future Farmers of the Americas] kid and not chemistry class kid. He was not quite a good friend of mine as I grew up, although his parents, Glenn and Betty Claire, were good friends of my parents. And they would joke that Betty Claire and Glenn were married a day before my parents were in December of 1940, and Larry arrived a day before I did, in January of 1942.

I visited Betty Claire when she was dying in the local hospital. She was lying on a gurney flat on her back in a hallway waiting for some procedure she knew she was about to endure to no avail. I came up to her and looking down at her said, "Betty Claire, so good to see you. How are you?" And she said, "Oh, I've been better." So that was another understanding of life that was part of the tradition in Worland, which is a laconic, deadpan, honest realization of how things really are.

## **FAMILY LIFE: 5<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION ELDEST SON, AT LEAST**

**Cathy:** Tell us about the artwork behind you.

Grant: Oh, yes. My grandmother came from a family that was higher in status than my other three grandparents. And accordingly, she had in her family a genealogy which was kept in what is the equivalent of the local courthouse in a small village in Okayama, not far from Hiroshima, up in the mountains, the same village that my grandfather grew up in. They were joined in an arranged marriage before Grandpa left for America.

So Grandma had to wait maybe 7 or 8 years before joining him in Wyoming. She was not a picture bride in which people from the village showed pictures to guys in the US and you were married to that person -- coming down the gang way, you saw your husband for the first time. Many of the Japanese families were formed that way. Grandma was not one of them. I will say that nearly all of picture brides with their picture husbands created exemplary families, maybe the majority of families from whom most Japanese Americans are descended.

And the genealogy behind me was kept at the local courthouse of my grandmother's village. It started in 1588, came down the male line, and ended with my grandmother's notice at the right. You read from right to left, so she's named on the extreme left side. My grandmother's notice of her marriage to my grandfather is unusual because here was a woman allowed on the genealogy. It came to my grandmother because her two brothers were sent to teach school after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 in which Japan defeated China and annexed what was then called Formosa, now Taiwan. They both died of some disease in Japanese-occupied Formosa. So she was the only heir to the genealogy, which arrived in a small box with irregular letters addressed to Big Horn County, Wyoming, USA, in 1915 or 1916. I had the genealogy translated by none other the great Edwin Reischauer, the scholar of Japan who once taught at Harvard.

When I was working in book publishing in Boston, someone who worked with me was Joni Reischauer, the daughter of Professor Reischauer. And so I asked Joni to ask her father to translate the genealogy for me, which he did. And he was happy to do it because he had recently suffered a stroke and did not know whether he could still read archaic Japanese, not contemporary Japanese. And he discovered after translating the document behind me that he still could. And this is how I learned that the grandma's family started in 1588 and came down through various male-line first sons, including adoptees, to maintain the line, and ended with

unaccountably, with a woman being included on the genealogy, namely my grandmother whom the genealogy noted had married one Ujifusa Shuichi. So that's the story of the framed item behind me.

**Cathy:** That was your grandmother. That was your Ujifusa grandmother. Was your grandfather the eldest son in his family?

**Grant:** Yes, but Grandma's family had more family status in status conscious Confucian Japan. So Grandpa married above himself. About Grandma. If ever there was a Buddhist saint, a bodhisattva, in the state of Wyoming, it was Grandma. She was the kindest, most giving person imaginable. I was blessed by her everyday presence in my young life.

### **Tom and Mary Ujifusa Had a Semi-Arranged Marriage**

**Joan:** I have a memory of standing with a group of women when I was, I don't know, maybe 11, 12, 13 years old. And your mother was in the group. Somehow, the group made some comment about arranged marriages, and your mother said, I believe, that her marriage was an arranged marriage. Is that true?

**Grant:** It's partially true. For most of human history, marriage was not a romantic institution. It was an economic institution, right? And so we found in Japanese peasant culture the same thing. But in the Japanese version of Confucian male patriarchal dominance, regardless of status, up to and including the current empress – a Harvard-educated commoner -- the woman could always say no.

**Joan:** I remember your mother's comment, "Wasn't I lucky?"

**Grant:** Yes. She was, I think, most fortunate. They had a fine marriage. It's [my mother's](#) nice way of putting things. What happened was that this was sort of half-and-half arranged marriage. Dad would visit various families as far away as Oregon and California where my grandfather was perceived as a success in the wilds of inland America. And later, oil was struck on his farm which heightened his sense of himself.

So Dad made these various trips that my grandfather would arrange to meet various families with eligible young women. When he met my mother in southern Colorado, he said to himself, "I really like this woman." That part was not arranged. And then a marriage broker, a *baishakun nin*, someone who knew both families, was brought in to formalize the understanding.

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In Mom's case, she could have said a firm no. And in America, the voice of her “no” would have rung louder than one in Japan. They had a marriage that was a good one for the most part. My mother and my grandfather were both extremely strong-minded people with very clear opinions about things. So in our three-generation household, there were sometimes clashes between my strong-willed grandfather and my strong-willed mother. My grandfather, who after the oil strike had become, by certain modest measures, a wealthy man. As wealthy and powerful men in Japan often do, he took a mistress. There's a Japanese version of the *New Yorker*, which had a cartoon of a man lying in bed reading next to his wife. And the wife turns to him and says, “Why aren't you out with your mistress? You're embarrassing me among my friends for being at home.” So having mistress was the indication of wealth, power, and status.

As for me, the [podcast that Carla Mowell](#) out of Shell did with me showed that half of my life in Worland was very Japanese. I ate rice every night for what some in New England to this day call “supper.” So it turned out I'm much more Japanese than I thought I was when I was playing high school football, or for that matter, when I was at Harvard when I never thought of myself as Japanese.

But my life was in the Worland farmhouse was very Japanese because my mother was fluent in the language and conversed in Japanese with my grandparents who live with us. I am now in no way fluent, but I was an able Japanese speaker until I was seven or eight years old. So I had two lives in Worland, one Japanese and one fully American in the Worland school system. I am happy to have been both to this very day.

## THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF THE WASHAKIE MUSEUM

**Cathy:** I hate to call a close, but Grant, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the Washakie Museum collection.

**Grant:** Thank you for agreeing to do this work.

**Cathy:** Well, we all have. It's been fascinating. Wait till you watch the videos and read the transcripts. You will be astonished at what you didn't know about our classmates and friends.

**Grant:** I look forward to that. I'm sorry for my condition of my lungs. I hope to get rid of the problem soon.

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**Laine:** Grant, thank you so much for following through with the interview today and we understand you're not feeling tip top you've had this cold that you're contending with and we appreciate so much you're being willing to just go ahead and do the interview despite the circumstances.

**Grant:** Thank you. I enjoyed doing this. I look forward seeing all of you in person soon, when the Museum launches our interviews on its website.