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Oral History Excerpt from Bainbridge Island before World War Two

Yaeko Sakai Yoshihara was 12 years old and in the 7th grade when her family was forcibly removed from Bainbridge Island in March 1942. She was the youngest of six children. Her family had a strawberry farm before the war. This interview was recorded in December 2006.

Life on Bainbridge was pretty simple. Even where our house was located, there was no electricity. It was pretty primitive... outdoor plumbing, well water, kerosene lamps, wood stove. It was very simple. . . . Socially, the Japanese, more or less, kind of stuck to themselves. There was a Japanese community... the Japanese Hall where people assembled. There was Japanese language school. When the kids were in third grade they would start the Japanese language school as a first grader. That's how I began. In the third grade I started Japanese language school. Then with... we played with our friends. In school we mixed... we were able to, you know, on the playground everybody played together. But when it came to kinda group things, it was always with our Japanese friends. We generally were not invited to the Caucasian parties or homes.

In the Japanese community, at that time, they had... like they would have annual bazaar. And then from time to time, a person from Seattle would bring Japanese movies. We would watch that. Then, sometimes there would be a talent show or some program and the people participated. For some reason I was always nominated to sing. 'Cause I liked to sing. But, I don't know, I just picked to do that. Then the Japanese school would have a program. We had to sing Japanese songs or whatever we learned.

Source: Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community,
https://www.bijac.org/index.php?p=HISTORYPre_LifeBefore