

Ada Lee - ILLUMINATION interview

Thomas [00:00:00] Welcome, everybody, to another conversation as part of the ILLUMINATION project of the Springfield History Museum. My name is Thomas Hiura. I'm the story collector for this year, working very harmoniously with our wonderful leadership team, Mimi Nollo, our photographer and Aimee Yogi, our consultant. I'm really grateful to have the chance to sit down with somebody who has, I think it's safe to say, paved the way for Asian-Americans here in this community, and been a real leading light for a sense of community and family here. That's my understanding. Ada Lee, how are you today?

Ada Lee [00:00:35] Fine, thank you.

Thomas [00:00:36] Wonderful. Thank you so much for being here. And we might as well go straight to the origin of your relocation to Eugene. So what brought you to Eugene and when did that take place?

Ada Lee [00:00:48] Well, I left Hong Kong when I graduated from high school. And in Hong Kong with a very good friend. Her name is Dorothy. Her parents is missionary in Hong Kong. And so we went to Canada in 1950. I think it's 1950. '49. Yes. And so we went to the Bible college. Her parents was a missionary. And I was very involved with the church, with her. And so after I graduated from there, I came down to Eugene. But in between time, it so happened that Dorothy, her auntie and uncle, they're missionaries who also live in Corvallis. So we get to come down to Corvallis every other week, and to work at Woolworth's.

Thomas [00:02:09] Woolworth's.

Ada Lee [00:02:12] The dime store. And so then we get the privilege to do that. That's how I was familiar with the US. And so after I graduated, 19...

Thomas [00:02:29] '52.

Ada Lee [00:02:30] '52. And then I. And then at once conference I met Dr. Griffin, at the-- at the time it was Northwest Christian College. So when I graduated, helped me to come down to the United States and attend a school part-time, shortly. And that's how come I was in Eugene.

Thomas [00:03:01] Can I ask you how that felt for you as far as homesickness, or anything with relocating that was missing home, or any kind of challenges there? I know I'm going off of the questions. I'm just curious.

Ada Lee [00:03:15] No, not really a lot, because my friend was with me and we were together all the time.

Thomas [00:03:24] Beautiful.

Ada Lee [00:03:25] You know, church activity. And so, we went to school together. We came down to Corvallis together. And so, of course, partly, but not really. In fact, we felt like we had some more freedom.

Thomas [00:03:44] And you were involved with the church, and it sounds like you started some businesses? Whether it was any restaurants?

Ada Lee [00:03:53] Well, not until we came down to Eugene. And then I got married in Eugene. I met my husband from Corvallis, and he was at Corvallis' university at the time. And so we started a restaurant in Sixth Street, right across now, right where the Gordon Hotel is now. But they still have a little red building there, it's dance hall now. We had one-third of that place. And next to it was a parking lot. Close to the post office.

Thomas [00:04:45] Wow. Yeah, it continues to be a vibrant part of Eugene. And my understanding is right in that area was a big part of the Asian-American community. The current Japanese internment memorial, for example, is just a block over.

Ada Lee [00:05:02] Correct. Correct. But that's where we first started the restaurant there. And the restaurant have a counter, and have three, one, two, three, four booths. And very small. And so we rented it ourself.

Thomas [00:05:27] What kind of food?

Ada Lee [00:05:29] Chinese food.

Thomas [00:05:37] Yum.

Ada Lee [00:05:37] Egg roll. Egg foo young was most popular. They don't do that anymore, I don't think. And perhaps I should tell you the experience of my first Eugene hospitality, and kindness of people. And that's how, make me feel like right now I have the opportunity, I should do it, back to the community. So when we have that restaurant, we have a five year lease. And it was through the bank because we have never met the person. And so we have been running for about a year, you know, very small. Two of us run it. And the banker came in and put a paper on top of the table, and say, Read it. And we say Yes, sir, but what about, you know, why do I have to read that paper? And he said, Just read it. So we started to read it. And we say, Oh, no, we can't afford to either buy it, or you know, you cannot just take it back. Because we don't have anything. We put everything in.

Thomas [00:07:03] Into the property, right?

Ada Lee [00:07:03] Just the restaurant.

Aimee Yogi [00:07:03] The restaurant, you were running the restaurant.

Ada Lee [00:07:04] Ourself. And so he said, Just read it. So when we read it, I can't help it. But when we read it, it said paid in full. So, I mean. Even to this day, we have never met this person. She says she's a lady. And she comes in all the time. But we never know who she was. And she felt like, she asked the banker, she said, When I pass away, then please make sure that this thing is paid in full. So the business was all paid up.

Thomas [00:08:00] What a blessing. What an act of service.

Ada Lee [00:08:06] So we felt that, I felt that, you know, that someone had done so much. And he also said, he can see how you folks, you know, treated people when they come in. And also that he said, Don't forget. Try and help others in the community. That word never left me. And I try my best. Can I have a Kleenex?

Thomas [00:08:43] That's extraordinary.

Ada Lee [00:08:43] And every time, I remember that very fondly. And that's the start. I mean, I don't know her. We don't know her. And she didn't know us, at all. But that is why people say, Eugene is so important to me. And I'd always tell the children, also. That what it meant is not just a town, and just a city, you see? Because we didn't-- thank you. We didn't know her. I wish we can even just meet her, and say thank you. And you know, for the generation to come is not just for us. And so I feel like for me, and for my family, whatever we want to do. That also, to help others. She was just a stranger. And we really needed something because just the two of us, we had to do dishes, to make the food, everything we did ourself, because it's so small anyway, and we can afford it. And how, you know, the word of encouragement that the banker said that just, you know, that they felt like that you would do something. That's how come she left that for us. So I feel like, that was a complete stranger. See? Not that I have related, or you demand something, or that. And so I feel like that's why. When I do something for the community and everything is so sincere, because I felt that that is necessary. And that was good for everyone. So I hope that some day Eugene, that people will change instead of, you know, fighting each other in the organization, and trying to do this and that. Because I think nothing could be more than that, you know? I know the Lord have blessed, the Lord have brought her. But that's the way we feel, and that's how I feel with the community. People say, Oh, it's not real, why are you doing this? Not real, why are you doing that? I say it's for people. But it's real, because of what I have experienced.

Thomas [00:11:54] And then from being able to have that support for your restaurant, you went on to start businesses throughout Springfield and Eugene as well.

Ada Lee [00:12:03] Correct. Correct.

Thomas [00:12:05] So, I'd love to hear about some of those.

Ada Lee [00:12:07] After, China Palace on 6th street. On 6th street. And then we started Ming's Restaurant, at 7th street. And then we started, because I went to a class with a friend, to a real estate class in Portland. And we saw that Trader Lee, oh, it was so nice, you know? With fire, and everything. So we said, Oh, we have to open Trader Lee. So we opened a Trader Lee in Eugene, and we opened a Trader Lee in Springfield.

Thomas [00:12:50] Right on Main Street.

Ada Lee [00:12:51] On Main Street. But I think now-- what they call it? Twin Dragon-- no.

Aimee Yogi [00:12:58] Great Wall.

[00:13:02] Great Wall. Which used to be Trader Lee.

Thomas [00:13:07] That's the same spot? I love that spot.

Ada Lee [00:13:10] Yes, yes. And so it's really amazing. And we tried to put some fire on in the front, you know, like Portland does. But it didn't work very well. And the fire department think that we should not do that anymore. So we took it down. But so we most of the time we, oh we have buffet. And we have a sign there. And we said, All you can eat. Do not waste. And if you leave food on the plate, your dinner is doubled. Like, you know, some pile up in the plate and then take it home. See, you can't do that. So, but it was

really lots of fun. And comparing Springfield to Eugene, it's not much different. I mean, years back, of course, they are a lumber town, so they come in and they eat more than today.

Thomas [00:14:21] After a hard day in the forests. Or in the mill.

Ada Lee [00:14:26] But we said, eat all you can eat. Don't leave, and don't waste. Wow. That's what the sign said.

Thomas [00:14:33] That's part of, I think, a collectivist tradition. Communitarian tradition of China and East Asia, and Asian cultures.

Ada Lee [00:14:45] Correct.

[00:14:46] Moreso here there's an individual mindset. So it sounds like you were kind of sharing part of your culture to say, if you take more than you need... you might get charged.

Ada Lee [00:15:01] You see lots of them wasted. You can't eat it all, and then it's just wasted. I don't mind, that's why they all you can eat, you know. But that's the thing. So then after Trader Lee, we opened one at 7th Street in Eugene, called Ming's Restaurant. And of course it went very well because there was only two restaurants in town at that time.

Thomas [00:15:33] When was that, roughly?

Ada Lee [00:15:36] Must be a couple of years later. I don't remember dates, or when we opened.

Thomas [00:15:43] Sure.

Ada Lee [00:15:44] And then we have one. It's the Trader Lee Eugene, Trader Lee Springfield, and then we have the House of Lee. It's right now, it's still at the 11th Street where the Spice 'n' Steam is now. We had the House of Lee, and my dad always have a booth in the back. And when the policeman comes in at night, they have free food and coffee.

Aimee Yogi [00:16:20] Oh, how nice.

[00:16:21] That they come in and like. And because they think that, oh, that's hard work and they protecting the city and the country? Yes, they should have food and coffee, warm. So they have a special space reserved for them in the House of Lee. And then we open one in-- oh, England Grill. It's at Tiffany building, the Tiffany building now, at 7th Street and it's really amazing. The front part is the coffee shop, you know? And then the back part is the real dining hall. We have a chef and we have a roast beef and everything, and the cart going to your table. And downstairs was the oyster bar. And it have a bar, looks like a boat. And have drinks and everything downstairs. That's the Tiffany building?

[00:17:26] Wow.

[00:17:27] And then...

Thomas [00:17:34] Asia Gardens?

Ada Lee [00:17:34] Oh, Asia Garden.

Aimee Yogi [00:17:36] Oh, I remember that.

Ada Lee [00:17:37] Yeah, that is right now the, the old Rock 'N Rodeo type, you know, right across from the Hilton. Yeah. So, then of course I started an accounting company, B & A. And then I went with a very good friend to Portland and we took classes, and I became a realtor. and so over the years I moved to realty. That's it. I'm partially retired now.

Thomas [00:17:59] Yeah.

Ada Lee [00:17:59] I'm 91. 92.

Thomas [00:18:22] You got to see the fruits of your labor.

[00:18:26] One thing I know is that you started sponsoring people to come to the US, and helping with new restaurants. How many people did you help support bringing them to the US and are some of them still in the community?

Ada Lee [00:18:41] I don't know. I think only one. Some of them left for, you know, like bigger city. And we've sponsored some cooks and some students. And some come in. Some of them come in and, in fact, we have mostly at our restaurant at the time, we hire students. Lots of students, because it's easier for them and they have, you know, more flexible hours and things like that. And there's lots of Asian student and things. In fact, we have one busboy that he, you know, when he was young, he was in Eugene. And he's a doctor now, in Eugene. But we have, after dinner, even with the bigger restaurant. Before that, we were able to have dinner with the cooks and waitress in the evening, before they leave. And we have dinner with them together. And of course, different family and different student' parents sometimes entrusted us with those kids also. So we hopefully, you know, that could do something that was never forgot. How we got here. How we got it there. So whatever we do is right now, it's from our heart, to see that the other people can at least have a little help with they need. It doesn't matter if they were a student or otherwise, you know, and some wanted to do business. And so, if we can help them, too.

Aimee Yogi [00:20:57] Mm hmm.

Thomas [00:20:59] Well, you shared so much about your business background and leadership. You talked some about your participation in church. I also know that you've done community organizing, essentially. And when would you say your community organizing began? And is there a story that first brought the Chinese community together, that we can unpack? I wonder if it would be-- just want to keep, yeah, because I know there are some notes here.

Ada Lee [00:21:37] Oh. Yeah. Because very early before organizing, you know, for the whole community. And then of course we have sponsored different cooks, and we have quite a few Chinese restaurants there. And then business was a little bit difficult, so they have started advertising for luncheon for 99 cents.

Thomas [00:22:07] Whoa.

Ada Lee [00:22:10] And we said no way, 99 cents? Well, it was \$1.25 before, you see? Regular \$1.25. And it was 99 cents, you have an egg roll, you have some rice and things like that. We said, no, no, no, no. Everyone is fighting, you know. And so we said, that won't work because we work so hard. We come in 4:00 in the morning, and work to 12:00, or 1:00 at night. And then for 99 cents, we don't make it five cents on it, you know? And so we said, no, no, so we get together. And so I have them. Most of the restaurants at that time, wasn't that many, you know, a few. And so we have after work, 2:00 in the morning. And so we all sat down and we say, look, if we all see \$1.10 or \$1.25, people will have to pay because everyone is charging the same. You can't go to you and say 99 cents, and come to me, a dollar. And so they agree. And so they all did that for a while. Until of course, later on and everything changed. But at that time we thought it was, that's how come we first brought them together. And then we were starting to have a group, you know. And everyone have children and things like that. And so, how we got together and then so we thought, oh, perhaps we should start something with the community. It was small, but it works.

Thomas [00:23:49] It's powerful, because instead of having anyone be able to try to get all of the sales,

Ada Lee [00:23:56] Correct.

Thomas [00:23:57] You made sure that you made sure that all of the businesses could survive and thrive.

Ada Lee [00:24:02] Yes. Because if not, I mean the 99 cents, everyone will go to them. And then the rest of us don't have any, you know, because we charge, I think, \$1.25 or \$1.30, something like that, you know. And everyone really, afterward, appreciated that because then you have to fight for it. You know, you give them two shrimp more, or one shrimp more, or something like that. And then you can charge a nickel more, or something, you know. And so that works out very well. And so I think at that beginning, and then the people really got together, and then we start. And then the younger generation, we say, Oh, perhaps we should start something with them. And so that's how come, and then there was lots of, like Ken Nagao, and David Toyama, and you know,

Aimee Yogi [00:25:03] Tony Lum. Carrie Matsushita.

Ada Lee [00:25:06] Yeah. Yeah. All these people. So we all got together, and then with, [Fern Ho (unconfirmed)], he was the one that actually started to say, Oh, perhaps we should have a group meeting together. And that olden time is, I think it's a little different, too. Everyone that really are trying to do it, is to help each other. And not-- I mean, I know business is is the war. Everyone have to fight everyone for any kind of business nowadays. But still, to a certain extent, we can still do some things. And still support in a different way. So that's how we filled that, you know, and then the group started. And then also, how we actually started the celebration was another item.

Thomas [00:26:08] The Asian Celebration?

Aimee Yogi [00:26:08] Right.

Ada Lee [00:26:09] Right? It started, in the beginning, the city asked if I can arrange something to have some entertainment, to entertain a businessman coming in from China

that wanted to buy the property where there only was, you know, only to make this something, they were coming in. And it was Chinese New Year. And so he said, how do I entertain him? You know, we don't know. Could you start something? And so I said, I don't know what. So we started together, a few families, and then have the children, three or four of them, come dance. And Jin and, what's his name?

Family member [00:27:19] Dennis.

Ada Lee [00:27:20] And they were really young. And so we have a rickshaw, and then we have them to do the dancing. A little dancing and then a song and everything. And we brought the boxed lunch from Hilton hotel, because we were just across from the Hilton hotel then, see? The Ming's Restaurant. And so we entertain him, and we got the red package and really Chinese New Year, make him feel at home, you know.

Aimee Yogi [00:27:56] Yeah, yeah.

[00:27:56] But of course, we'll never dare to go back to Hilton because we left the floor, everything with Chinese food. But anyway, so that's how actually this started. And that's how the Asian Council started. Because the city said please, please. And then, [Soon-Young Truong (unconfirmed)]. She was here and then she printed those, what you call it. We had about 30, 40 people attend, you know. The Asian family, with the children, and we did singing and a little song and gathering. And make him feel like it's New Year, see? And so that's that actually was the the beginning of of that part. And then the organization that we start going to, started the Asian Council-- Asian Celebration. And that's why sometimes I feel like because the purpose of this is to bring the community, everyone together, so we can help each other. Not to say, This is a nonprofit. And it's for the good people that need help, that we can help, young or old doesn't make any difference. Instead of fighting to say, Oh, wow, you can't do this, you can't do that, we have to do that. And that's why I feel really sad inside, that when you see it now, it's so different. Hopefully we can have it then, differently. We can eventually change differently to think differently, you know, and we can really help each other, to do that.

Thomas [00:30:05] Yeah. One thing I think I'm hearing also is the goal of Asian Celebration. It wasn't about making money for individuals, but supporting Asian businesses and culture.

Ada Lee [00:30:20] Correct. Correct. So we can help other business too, you know. That the people can, in fact, donate back and help others, you see. And right now it just, I mean, I'm just at times very heartbroken when I look at it. The purpose is different. And we have to change it, you know, to do it how I think we can. If everyone just think different, to get the people together. I mean, that's why we are trying to establish a, what is it called? That center?

[00:31:03] Community.

[00:31:03] A community center, now. For the community center, we hope to have the elderly. There's lots of retired elderly. And they're still very capable, we have greeters, we have cooks. We have different people here that could volunteer their time. And so that the young people after school, Oh, I'd like to go into the culinary industry. Fine. After school we have a class there, free of charge, that the elderly people come to teach you. And you can come and, you know, learn the industry. Or people would donate their time as an electrician or whatever. And so that the young people can be connected, and yet to come

to learn something from the old people. Likew, our things are gone, you see what we have. And so that they can also benefit to the people. Some of the children just go to school, they have no activity and they cannot afford the activity. And so these will be free to them to come in and learn something. And also, I think that's very important that they, of course, with the with the Asian Chinese thing, that you know how to respect, also. How to think and respect, really, that's lots of the thing. So we are trying to get the center going. And they don't stay there, the elderly don't stay there. They come in. But they the duty is that-- the ones that cannot teach or do anything is fine. They could sit there and enjoy, perhaps play some mahjong and play some cards. And then talk to each other. And I know that one couple, that love to just sit there and recite poetry to one another, and sometimes you have to get up, you know, not listen. But lots of things, you know? And they can contribute. Like [Stephen], he can show them how to plant. Since he can grow a pumpkin, big like that in his yard.

Aimee Yogi [00:33:47] Steve Love?

Ada Lee [00:33:48] Yeah.

Aimee Yogi [00:33:49] Oh, yeah.

Ada Lee [00:33:50] He can really grow things, you know. And then we will have a little.

Aimee Yogi [00:33:55] He has a tree that has seven different fruits, grafted to it.

Ada Lee [00:33:56] Exactly. Yeah. And then we have a place that they can do different things, and then outside the yard, and they come. But at the center, they don't stay over. They just come. And so to contribute their time and knowledge to the younger generation, see?

Aimee Yogi [00:34:31] Just a gathering place.

Ada Lee [00:34:33] Yes. So they'll have something like, if someone likes to read poetry. And someone will want to sit there and listen to them all day, you know. But there's an audience and someone could listen to them or they. And some of these elderly children, I mean, the children would be very happy also, that the older parents or something have something to do. And so also we can, you know, gather. You know, almost like the celebration thing. But not to think about, you know, like making a profit. Doing this and that so that we can, you know, manage to do that. And sometimes when I look at what Bob did, that is the wishes that I think, with this new center, hopefully the elderly could actually give the young ones a little bit, something of advice. You know how we have gone through things that we have learned, in the hard way. That they might do it because they're so, you know, much advanced. With me, I mean I cannot do my computer. I must tell you one thing, it's funny. That one group of us, I mean, lots of them went to LCC and take a class, and take the computer class. And the teachers say, Good, everyone have their computer in front. Yes, turn it on.... How do you turn it on?

Thomas [00:36:20] Yeah. Sure.

Ada Lee [00:36:23] I said, Oh. Where's the button? In the front, or in the back? Now to any-- even the child, you know. Know how to do it. But we don't. I've ever seen it. And so. It's so confusing. She's so confused. Every time I ask, where's that thing? It's gone. Always.

Thomas [00:36:41] They don't label them anymore, either. They hardly ever label a power button, on a phone, or--.

Ada Lee [00:36:45] So that's why I think that a center like that, that we will feel like, you know, we can contribute also. And then the knowledge that we have, whatever we have, I think will be good for the younger generation. And know that that's how people can get together. It doesn't matter who you are, that you can get together, it's because you are willing to do that. Young or old, like that. So, generation after generation, the younger ones can actually learn something, you see? And, of course, there's lots of things we can. I can't turn on a computer anyway. But that's okay.

Thomas [00:37:40] Well, you've spoken to the intergenerational gifts that we give one another. In terms of how your generation can teach mine and the younger ones so much about communication, collaboration together, working towards a common goal. Traditions that are important, and the younger generation have certain skills and advantages that they can help other people learn as well, to access information.

Ada Lee [00:38:08] Exactly, exactly.

Thomas [00:38:08] And it's just best, when-- and the Asian Celebration was absolutely and continues to be very intergenerational.

Ada Lee [00:38:17] Correct. Correct. And it's not for profit, not for the name. I dislike that. No, so I think if we can really, sincerely-- because in olden time, I call it in our generation, I think that lots of young people would have really learned from the group. Instead of saying, Oh, no, I want this power, I want this, I want commercial-- definitely, this is not commercial. This is not for profit. This is not for your name. It's just what you're willing to do. I don't have to have my name on it every time, but I just want to do it. And because I feel so strongly, you know, I always think about what that lady did. Why? I'd never known her. We never known her. And when the banker said, Paid in full.

Thomas [00:39:32] Unbelievable.

Ada Lee [00:39:32] So I mean, people say, I don't believe that. I say, that's fine, but it's true. Then that's why my feeling is that whatever we do is for the better of the generation of the community. It doesn't matter if you're Japanese, Chinese, Korean. I hope that everyone can get together. And then the younger generation would learn from it. And so, I mean, there's so much smarter nowadays with all these mechanical, something like that. But, that's okay.

Thomas [00:40:08] Well, Ada, even though we have modern technology now, we're not always more advanced. And one thing I love about this project is we're here on behalf of Springfield. And Springfield is has wonderful, age-diverse community, elderly, all the way down to children. And they have a real sense of community as a town. And it sounds to me like in some ways, we are all trying to do, with your help, establishing that sense of community for Asian-Americans there.

Ada Lee [00:40:42] Correct.

Thomas [00:40:42] Not unlike what you were experiencing with that woman who came in, who helped sustain the Asian-American community in Eugene. And that, I think, is

something that I'm really excited about. And it's so much of a privilege to hear from you, as having laid so much of the framework for that. So I want to say thank you, and I want to ask you. We can continue to talk about anything you like, but the future in your eyes for the Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Desi community. All of these Pan-Asian communities. It's obviously a lot different nowadays than when you were coming here, for the first time to Corvallis and Eugene. And so what does the future look like, to you, with your perspective and wisdom? I think we have some notes on this page, here.

Ada Lee [00:41:41] Yeah. Get rid--.

Thomas [00:41:47] Yeah, it says, coming from a time of building to now, a time of supporting, sharing and nurturing. The future is bright and there are some important reasons we need to support one another more than ever, nowadays. I agree with that. Feeling ready for communities to come together and have a place to gather, share and learn from one another. Like, actual spaces I think, as we mentioned the community center. The generations can learn from one another and teach skills to one another. We've definitely talked about that. With the many talents and skills of the community. Cultural traditions and new ideas can be shared. And there's so much here. But getting your perspective, you know?

Ada Lee [00:42:31] Community can support each other. So you have to focus on giving one another that focus. And not to say, Oh, wow, we can make money on this, make money on that. This is different. Everyone has to do that. But this part -- it's part of you, part of me -- it's a different part of you, see? And they have knowledge, and I know that even now, lots of young people are still not underprivileged of food, underprivileged of games, but underprivileged of knowing, and really what living is. What live should be like. And that is more important. Once they have that in their heart, they don't think about, well, if I can jump to that then I'll be the President. Or I can be whatever. And so instead of the that, oh, how about the others? I'm so fortunate, how about the others? And I think then that will make the community strong. That will make the family strong. Without that, you just can't. Because lots of the elderly and everyone are willing to share, see? And so that's why we're trying to get a place, having a place everyone is welcome. And it feels, you know, the family through sharing of culture, language and food together. It doesn't matter Chinese, Japanese, Korean, whatever. But if we are just together, and so that the other generation understand each other. And I think it will make a different city, different country. And of course, there's always, you know, fighting a little bit. That's no harm. You know, your family do that all the time.

Aimee Yogi [00:44:40] Yeah. And right now, here we go again, you know?

Ada Lee [00:44:42] That's right.

Aimee Yogi [00:44:42] I'm talking to sister city Kakegawa and, you know, they're always off on their own and everybody is so happy and everything. And now, we're worried about armament and nuclear war and dangerous waters. And it's like, okay, you know what? We got to get together again.

Ada Lee [00:45:04] That's right.

Aimee Yogi [00:45:04] We got to share. We got to send the Yujin Gakuen graduating class to Japan. Re-establish all those relationships. Because it sustained us in the past. And this is what works. For future generations.

Ada Lee [00:45:22] Correct. So I think that if the city that, you know, we felt like it worked so well. And then until then, then we had the Asian Celebration and things like that. And not to think about, you know, all the name, and I go out and say, Oh, I'm the President of this, and that, and that.

Thomas [00:45:45] It looks like my batteries ran out.

Aimee Yogi [00:45:47] Oh no.

Thomas [00:45:49] Do you have AAs? [1 minute elapses.] Thank, you so much.

Aimee Yogi [00:45:52] And I think we've come to realize that nothing is static, nothing stays. So, everything changes. And we just, our community now, with all of us, we're resilient. We've been through this before, we can do it again.

Ada Lee [00:46:12] Exactly.

Aimee Yogi [00:46:13] We know how to do it. Because you, and Ken, and David Toyama, and Tony Lum and Carrie have shown us how to care for this community. How to become that collective community. And that value is something.

Thomas [00:46:35] Well, I want to apologize to any listeners who were interrupted by the batteries dying. We got them replaced. I don't think we missed too much, but one thing that I really admire, Ada. I look at sometimes politics and marketing, and there's a term called message discipline. Any question I'm asking you, you seem to bring it back to the community, to people being willing to put the people over their own moneymaking interests. And that's really the message that people are getting from you. And I want to thank you, because my mom was able to find sense of comfort, coming from Japan in the nineties, from working in a restaurant. Sakura, on 13th. And that was very important for her, because when she came over, it was a challenging time, you know? To lose so much of what being in her previous culture was. The community element to me is just, I'm going to treasure that we got to have this conversation, because you find so many ways to articulate the importance of it.

Ada Lee [00:47:42] Thank you. I think that we can, if we all get together instead of thinking, sometimes when I think about the Asian Celebration, my heart just really hurt, you know? That everyone's fighting just for the name. When they go out and say, Oh, I'm the president of this and that, and so on like that. And it just really, really bothers me. Because the purpose is not there. It's not for commercial. That's why I fight it when they say, you know, this and that. And there's lots of them, and these young people, and our older generation are willing to contribute whatever we have. So when they pass us, that they know, the value of how is it, you know? And it's so important that we help each other. Instead of saying, well, no, you can't do this, you can't do that. And the thing is, when you start doing that, how about the younger generation watching you? Then they would say, Oooh. They will be, well it's because they are smarter and now, you know, all electronic. But I don't care how smart you are on those things, but it's how you really live your life, and really think. And I think that's the only way, is to, like people always say, Oh, you are my family. Is it true? I mean, sure, family fight, too. But then they are still related in it. So if we were to get, that's why when the center is started, we're going to have fundraising pretty soon to start the center. And then it's not, they don't come in and stay, they just come in. And when younger generation, whatever proficiency they have, they can teach, and we will

have a kitchen. Then they said, I'd like to go open a restaurant. I'd like to, you know, do something. Lots of young people like to be, a bakery or whatever. Then we have some retired people come in, and they could teach them. They could help them out, and things like that. See? And I think that we already applied for that, and hopefully we can start fundraising, and get some, so it will benefit. It's not for profit. That's no profit. Everyone have to work hard for it, you know? And so that they will have something like that. That will be my hope and dream.

Thomas [00:50:34] We sure appreciate you taking the time. And I think that your message will be heard loud and clear. Ada.

Ada Lee [00:50:41] Thank you. Thank you.

Thomas [00:50:42] I want to say thank you. Thank you to everybody involved with this wonderful project. We've now concluded all six of our interviews, six and a half, with Helen. Rikki Poon, Hai Nguyen, Aimee Yogi, Jody Willis, Melissa Cariño, Helen Liu (a partial interview, with Aimee). And a wonderful time to get to talk with you, Ada Lee.

[00:51:09] Thank you. Thank you.

[00:51:09] So thank you so much. Thank you to the community of Springfield, and we wish you all a good day.

Ada Lee [00:51:15] Thank you.