

Rory Fukuda Oral History Interview 2.9.24

Retired Designer Draftsman for a Public Utilities Company

De Anza College Winter 2024 quarter

Steve Nava and SOC 14 student interviewer: Sean Bridges; Christin Shulepov and Diego Rueda

Spaces of Belonging Project: Hidden in Plain Site/Sight

NEH Grant

https://fhda-edu.zoom.us/rec/share/6wF8NkjiNWzrfzbfZeJbizjSMsBnfRk-L_Jzefre7EawtPRPHuOO9OZSAQpvZxLL.nCUIDnOrhK8s_qY2?startTime=1707500868000

Summary:

In this oral history interview conducted February 9th, 2024, Rory Fukuda a retired designer draftsman who grew up near Japantown where his father ran a barbershop in the 1970s shares his connections to the family legacy businesses in San Jose's Japantown as well as his experiences watching Santa Clara County undergo cultural change. Fukuda's reflections focus primarily on the San Jose area near Japantown as they transition from multiple lucrative orchards to the metropolis we see today with its tech-heavy industries. He reflects on how most people who are part of the Japantown community actually live outside of Japantown, but they are committed to building sense of community there in order to preserve something precious to them. He adds that the younger shop owners and connected community members try to bring more foot traffic to Japantown for several yearly cultural festivals that include Chinese and now Vietnamese cultural events in addition to the Japanese festivals including *Obon* (for honoring ancestors) and *Nikkei Matsuri* (which honors Japanese culture).

Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alqgwxKhzIM>

Steve Nava: My name is Steve Nava. I'm a sociology instructor at the end of college and also working with the California History center on oral histories, project focus on social spaces and social change, historical change.

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00:11:40.220 --> 00:11:44.290

Steve Nava: And we're keeping an archive of these oral history interviews.

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00:11:44.310 --> 00:11:48.500

Steve Nava: Today is February 9th, 2024.

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00:11:48.520 --> 00:11:51.990

Steve Nava: And it's 10 am. And I'm gonna go ahead and

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00:11:52.170 --> 00:11:55.949

Steve Nava: turn it over to you, Rory, and I'll ask you to share your

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00:11:56.290 --> 00:12:00.859

Steve Nava: your age occupation how you identify

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00:12:01.050 --> 00:12:03.280

Steve Nava: and your birth year

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00:12:03.630 --> 00:12:08.080

Rory Fukuda: sure. My name is Rory Fukuda. I'm 66

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00:12:08.310 --> 00:12:09.680

Rory Fukuda: retired.

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00:12:09.700 --> 00:12:22.140

Rory Fukuda: I was a designer draftsman for public utilities company for about 30, 33 years, and so I've been retired now for about 10 years, now retired early

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00:12:22.690 --> 00:12:25.799

Rory Fukuda: and born and raised in San Jose.

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00:12:26.480 --> 00:12:36.809

Rory Fukuda: I used to. I was born and raised and grew up in a small neighborhood in San Jose called [Rosemary Gardens](#). It's actually a little about a mile or two north of Japan town

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00:12:37.420 --> 00:12:43.530

Rory Fukuda: near First Street in Gish. I don't know if you guys know where that is. You're first and 101 out there.

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00:12:44.270 --> 00:12:46.099

Rory Fukuda: I now live

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00:12:46.900 --> 00:12:56.220

Rory Fukuda: now, South sounds a little bit further. But yeah. So we're pretty much retired now.

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00:12:59.570 --> 00:13:05.310

Rory Fukuda: Anything else? Did I miss anything? No, okay.

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00:13:07.320 --> 00:13:12.139

Diego Rueda: okay, yeah. So. I was just wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your family background.

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00:13:13.050 --> 00:13:19.450

Rory Fukuda: Sure, like. I said, I was born and raised in San Jose. My mom still lives in the house that I was born and raised in with my brother

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00:13:19.610 --> 00:13:30.520

Rory Fukuda: and it was a small little neighborhood so I was born and raised, born 1957.

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00:13:31.020 --> 00:13:44.449

Rory Fukuda: So most of my memories is during the sixties. going to elementary school then and back. Then San Jose was mostly farms. and there was a downtown area, but it was really small.

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00:13:44.530 --> 00:13:58.450

Rory Fukuda: and there are a few shops downtown, few stores, but pretty much in my area. where we grew up. Yeah, it was pretty tiny. Yeah.

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00:13:59.110 --> 00:14:09.570

Rory Fukuda: Most of my family lives here in San Jose aunts, uncles, grandparents. So we have the usual family gatherings on the holidays

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00:14:09.810 --> 00:14:11.230

Rory Fukuda: and things like that.

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00:14:12.240 --> 00:14:14.440

Rory Fukuda: But yeah.

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00:14:15.730 --> 00:14:18.420

Rory Fukuda: pretty much. It's it, as far as family goes.

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00:14:18.590 --> 00:14:22.600

Steve Nava: and Christine...

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00:14:27.220 --> 00:14:38.360

Christine: I was just wondering if you could tell me like more about what it was like growing up during like the time and place of your childhood.

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00:14:38.790 --> 00:14:40.760

Rory Fukuda: Sure.

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00:14:41.910 --> 00:14:43.989

Rory Fukuda: in the 60s.

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00:14:45.240 --> 00:14:46.470

Rory Fukuda: pretty much

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00:14:48.270 --> 00:14:51.010

Rory Fukuda: like I said, most of it was farming community.

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00:14:51.220 --> 00:14:58.460

Rory Fukuda: and where my neighborhood was a little bit north of Japantown, kind of [North San Jose](#).

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00:14:58.620 --> 00:15:03.710

Rory Fukuda: but beyond that I don't know if you guys know where the [Matrix Casinos](#) are

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00:15:04.310 --> 00:15:05.770

Rory Fukuda: down in San Jose.

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00:15:05.910 --> 00:15:19.670

Rory Fukuda: it's kind of 101 and first street out there, but north and beyond that which is farmlands. So I remember from my school. If you looked out the window, all you saw was fields and orchards.

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00:15:19.890 --> 00:15:27.630

Rory Fukuda: That's pretty much the area we're on the outskirts of town, so to speak. and the way the

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00:15:28.700 --> 00:15:33.150

Rory Fukuda: neighborhoods were set up as around Japantown there were

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00:15:34.230 --> 00:15:37.310

Rory Fukuda: like 4 or 5 elementary schools.

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00:15:37.740 --> 00:15:43.399

Rory Fukuda: and each elementary school served a specific, small little neighborhood group

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00:15:43.640 --> 00:15:45.199

Rory Fukuda: around that area.

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00:15:45.670 --> 00:15:48.650

Rory Fukuda: in my area there was

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00:15:48.910 --> 00:16:02.209

Rory Fukuda: so-called [Bachrodt Elementary](#) and that served a community and housing area of about I don't know 800 to a thousand homes. and that was pretty much my world growing up in the sixties.

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00:16:02.750 --> 00:16:10.589

Rory Fukuda: was there, all my friends and all the kids all went to the same school, and we were within bike riding distance of each other.

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00:16:10.870 --> 00:16:13.980

Rory Fukuda: and that was pretty much how it was growing up

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00:16:14.000 --> 00:16:17.780

Rory Fukuda: in the sixties, and by the time I reached Junior High.

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00:16:17.940 --> 00:16:18.960

Rory Fukuda: then

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00:16:19.560 --> 00:16:33.690

Rory Fukuda: what it was all the kids would say, "what high school or what junior high? What elementary school did you go to? What elementary school did you go to?" So we were all known for the different areas of schools that we went to, and we all kind of congregated in junior high

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00:16:36.170 --> 00:16:38.930

Rory Fukuda: what else?

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00:16:39.370 --> 00:16:40.939

Rory Fukuda: As far as growing up.

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00:16:41.150 --> 00:16:46.969

Rory Fukuda: pretty much. The school was the central location where all the kids would gather

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00:16:47.170 --> 00:16:49.760

Rory Fukuda: give you an idea

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00:16:50.510 --> 00:16:55.190

Rory Fukuda: if like there were. 2 or 3 of us were at school, and we wanted to start a baseball game.

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00:16:55.590 --> 00:17:11.589

Rory Fukuda: What we would do is send everybody out on bikes and start knocking on doors and saying, "Hey, go to Harvey's house, see if he wants to come, play baseball, go to Jerry's house and see if he wants to come play." So, we would gather kids like that

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00:17:11.630 --> 00:17:17.060

Rory Fukuda: to have a baseball game or a basketball game at school and so

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00:17:19.349 --> 00:17:27.450

Rory Fukuda: from kindergarten to sixth grade. Our world was kind of in that neighborhood pretty much, and nothing much beyond that.

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00:17:28.450 --> 00:17:38.710

Rory Fukuda: I did have, though my father owned a business in Japantown. He was a barber. He owned a barbershop with my uncle.

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00:17:38.830 --> 00:17:50.210

Rory Fukuda: and so I've got exposure to Japantown through my dad. He was involved with the Buddhist church. So festivals and things like that he would help out. So, I've got exposure to that.

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00:17:51.310 --> 00:17:54.110

Rory Fukuda: So, but pretty much

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00:17:54.200 --> 00:18:00.160

Rory Fukuda: elementary school was pretty much in the neighborhood and didn't venture out too far. Yeah.

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00:18:02.080 --> 00:18:03.210

Rory Fukuda: But

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00:18:03.300 --> 00:18:11.620

Christine: and then like, did you have a firm community that you felt well connected to? And

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00:18:11.750 --> 00:18:17.589

Christine: did you have any like specific places in mind that you felt like a sense of belonging

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00:18:21.380 --> 00:18:26.700

Rory Fukuda: from the ages of about from 5 until 12.

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00:18:28.050 --> 00:18:30.259

Rory Fukuda: It was kind of limited as to

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00:18:31.650 --> 00:18:38.130

Rory Fukuda: what I felt belong to you know, as far as a community. And again, it was pretty much the school.

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00:18:38.480 --> 00:18:40.480

Rory Fukuda: the neighborhood

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00:18:40.600 --> 00:18:47.179

Rory Fukuda: There were a lot of kids in this one section of neighborhood, and we all knew each other

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00:18:48.160 --> 00:18:59.590

Rory Fukuda: so for a kid that age 12 and under that was pretty much my community. you know, we'd always be getting together with 3, 4, 5 different guys, girls.

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00:19:00.050 --> 00:19:05.550

Rory Fukuda: We had a creek behind the neighborhood where we go there and catch frogs and snakes

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00:19:05.820 --> 00:19:13.899

Rory Fukuda: walking home from school. If there are pears growing in the orchard across the street would grab pears and be eating pears on the way home.

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00:19:14.450 --> 00:19:17.789

Rory Fukuda: and that was pretty much it.

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00:19:18.110 --> 00:19:24.999

Rory Fukuda: you know, just focusing on school and just having fun, really. So, there wasn't much sense of

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00:19:25.860 --> 00:19:28.490

Rory Fukuda: community as a whole

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00:19:28.590 --> 00:19:30.520

Rory Fukuda: other than just being a kid.

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00:19:30.640 --> 00:19:36.550

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, but pretty much within that neighborhood. We never ventured beyond that very rarely. Yeah.

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00:19:37.920 --> 00:19:43.469

Christine: So was like the kind of neighborhood where you felt that kind of belonging to.

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00:19:45.260 --> 00:19:58.429

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, for me, that was the community. And I think for most of the kids, from what I've talked to my friends who lived in other went to other elementary schools and lived in other neighborhoods. That was kind of their community, too.

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00:19:59.070 --> 00:20:12.439

Rory Fukuda: Yeah. And a lot of those communities have disappeared. Neighborhoods there used to be like, I said, 5 or 6 different elementary schools throughout around Japantown and each one had their own little neighborhood.

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00:20:12.610 --> 00:20:17.799

Rory Fukuda: Since then, out of the four or five there are only two now that are existing.

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00:20:18.460 --> 00:20:26.039

Rory Fukuda: and so now everybody buses and parents bring their kids to school now by car. Hardly anybody walks to school anymore.

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00:20:26.260 --> 00:20:27.010

Rory Fukuda: Yeah.

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00:20:28.430 --> 00:20:30.100

Christine: thank you. Sure.

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00:20:31.260 --> 00:20:38.019

Steve Nava: Oh, just one question to add to that were there any specific places in Japantown that you might

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00:20:38.040 --> 00:20:40.390

Steve Nava: say, well, that's still a place that I,

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00:20:40.550 --> 00:20:44.620

Steve Nava: you know, have a lot of memories of, or I still, you know.

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00:20:44.650 --> 00:20:46.240

Steve Nava: pass by that place?

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00:20:46.790 --> 00:20:51.720

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, quite a few, I mean. My dad's barbershop is still there.

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00:20:51.840 --> 00:21:01.170

Rory Fukuda: and I think it's turn now turned into a, it's still a hair salon, believe it or not and I think it's African American that specialized in African American hair.

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00:21:01.800 --> 00:21:08.949

Rory Fukuda: But there were diners and restaurants that I used to go to when I used to hang out at the barbershop with my father.

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00:21:09.540 --> 00:21:14.440

Rory Fukuda: and those have since changed over and turned into restaurants

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00:21:15.690 --> 00:21:16.840

Rory Fukuda: and

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00:21:18.080 --> 00:21:25.119

Rory Fukuda: are not the same as they used to be when I was a kid. Yeah, there's been a lot of change in Japantown, a lot of turnover.

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00:21:28.190 --> 00:21:35.469

Steve Nava: Do you feel like the turnover was pretty quick between different businesses, or that that it took a while for things to sort of

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00:21:35.500 --> 00:21:37.310

Steve Nava: new businesses to come in?

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00:21:37.570 --> 00:21:40.130

Rory Fukuda: or has that? Has that pace changed over time?

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00:21:40.940 --> 00:21:48.120

Rory Fukuda: It's it was slow. Mostly it was the older generation.

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00:21:48.310 --> 00:21:53.190

Rory Fukuda: my grandparents generation owning businesses.

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00:21:53.260 --> 00:22:01.620

Rory Fukuda: And then it was just a matter of whether their kids, my parents generation, would take over the business or not.

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00:22:02.270 --> 00:22:03.540

Rory Fukuda: and in most

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00:22:03.550 --> 00:22:09.159

Rory Fukuda: some cases that did not. And so a lot of the restaurants remained

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00:22:09.270 --> 00:22:13.820

Rory Fukuda: empty for quite a while, until somebody picked it up and

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00:22:13.900 --> 00:22:16.270

Rory Fukuda: renovated it and brought it back

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00:22:16.480 --> 00:22:18.139

Rory Fukuda: so. And

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00:22:18.960 --> 00:22:24.460

Rory Fukuda: and it was pretty slow, especially during the seventies Japantown was.

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00:22:24.960 --> 00:22:29.669

Rory Fukuda: There wasn't a whole out there, a lot of storefronts. A lot of buildings were empty.

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00:22:30.070 --> 00:22:34.370

Rory Fukuda: So it wasn't as like, it used to be

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00:22:34.490 --> 00:22:38.060

Rory Fukuda: in the 50s or early 60s yeah.

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00:22:39.180 --> 00:22:42.540

Steve Nava: I'll leave it to Omar to ask number 4.

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00:22:43.950 --> 00:22:50.129

Omar: Can you talk about your teenage years? Did you join a community or a group with similar interest?

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00:22:50.830 --> 00:22:55.720

Rory Fukuda: Let me see if I remember

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00:22:58.840 --> 00:23:02.710

Rory Fukuda: not in my teenage years. No,

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00:23:03.870 --> 00:23:09.430

Rory Fukuda: pretty much. Most of my friends that did. They joined like. They took judo

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00:23:09.490 --> 00:23:17.590

Rory Fukuda: at the church but not a whole lot of community stuff was going on. During that time

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00:23:18.730 --> 00:23:29.869

Rory Fukuda: I was focused mostly on junior high and then high school but the only community during High School and Junior High. That I was a part of

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00:23:30.190 --> 00:23:31.410

Rory Fukuda: was music.

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00:23:32.820 --> 00:23:39.820

Rory Fukuda: Since third grade I played a musical instrument, and I played all the way through until about the first or second year of college.

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00:23:40.410 --> 00:23:43.910

Rory Fukuda: But yeah, not a whole lot of

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00:23:44.200 --> 00:23:45.650

Rory Fukuda: community joining.

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00:23:46.230 --> 00:23:50.880

Rory Fukuda: yeah, right now, the only communities

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00:23:50.970 --> 00:23:57.850

Rory Fukuda: back...Then communities were like Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts or if you played sports

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00:23:58.280 --> 00:24:02.790

Rory Fukuda: through different organizations like the church had its own

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00:24:03.110 --> 00:24:11.199

Rory Fukuda: baseball team and basketball team. There's [PAL or Police Athletic League](#) with the head. There are different sports going on.

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00:24:11.570 --> 00:24:17.039

Rory Fukuda: But that was pretty much the choices in the sixties and seventies that I had. Yeah.

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00:24:20.730 --> 00:24:22.009

Steve Nava: then,

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00:24:22.760 --> 00:24:31.350

Steve Nava: how did the transition from young adulthood shape your participation in the communities that matter to you? What changed and what stayed the same for you over time.

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00:24:32.920 --> 00:24:35.919

Rory Fukuda: I was pretty much wasn't till I was like

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00:24:36.890 --> 00:24:40.520

Rory Fukuda: high school seeing you right around there

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00:24:41.060 --> 00:24:45.529

Rory Fukuda: that I started looking at things a little bit differently, more nostalgic.

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00:24:46.260 --> 00:24:51.879

Rory Fukuda: Suddenly looking back and seeing the changes in Japantown and seeing the changes in downtown San Jose

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00:24:51.950 --> 00:24:55.210

Rory Fukuda: and all around San Jose, the growing development.

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00:24:55.240 --> 00:24:58.000

Rory Fukuda: This was just before the hightech boom.

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00:24:58.090 --> 00:25:01.929

Rory Fukuda: and there were already changes. Farmlands were disappearing, you know, and

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00:25:02.000 --> 00:25:12.520

Rory Fukuda: and going away and being developed, and neighborhoods are popping up and businesses were popping up. So there was this constant transition happening, and it was happening really quick.

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00:25:12.980 --> 00:25:14.520

Rory Fukuda: especially in the

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00:25:15.530 --> 00:25:23.080

Rory Fukuda: like. I said late mid to late seventies and it was just before the tech boom. So

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00:25:23.380 --> 00:25:28.300

Rory Fukuda: right then, you start feeling when lot of change is happening so quickly.

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00:25:28.510 --> 00:25:42.440

Rory Fukuda: you start to feel a little nostalgic, and you start looking back on things you start trying to see if maybe you know, looking, you hear people talking about preserving this, or preserving *a way* or a festival of that or

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00:25:42.520 --> 00:25:50.290

Rory Fukuda: a certain art form or building, you know. But it wasn't until I was

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00:25:50.980 --> 00:25:53.320

Rory Fukuda: unfortunately a little older

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00:25:53.580 --> 00:25:59.969

Rory Fukuda: before college before I started noticing that. And and caring about it. Yeah.

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00:26:02.810 --> 00:26:04.469

Steve Nava: And Sean's gonna ask the next question.

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00:26:07.390 --> 00:26:32.660

Sean Bridges: yeah, just a great note. I come actually come from Huntington Beach, California, and I saw I've seen, like the photos of Huntington Beach in the fifties and sixties where they used to be these towering oil rigs along the beach from the nineties, when, like there wasn't a whole lot of business there but, I saw my community grow, and I kind of had that sense in nostalgia of like

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00:26:32.880 --> 00:26:44.159

Sean Bridges: you know what it was before all of these businesses came in and changed, how Huntington Beach looked so, I get that I feel that.

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00:26:44.210 --> 00:26:45.879

Sean Bridges: my question.

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00:26:46.270 --> 00:26:52.720

Sean Bridges: Can you talk about a community you were part of most recently that you feel a strong sense of belonging to

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00:26:58.100 --> 00:27:01.669

Rory Fukuda: currently right now, I do a lot of

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00:27:01.870 --> 00:27:04.479

Rory Fukuda: I find a lot of projects

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00:27:06.000 --> 00:27:15.379

Rory Fukuda: in Japantown lately. Now, I used to work for a non-profit and I used to build

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00:27:15.430 --> 00:27:20.430

Rory Fukuda: planter boxes and things like that for them in gates and fences, and then

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00:27:21.620 --> 00:27:26.940

Rory Fukuda: and then they lost their Grant money and stopped doing their thing, but

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00:27:27.190 --> 00:27:28.680

Rory Fukuda: in Japantown

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00:27:28.710 --> 00:27:37.949

Rory Fukuda: I know a lot of people down there. I walk my dog down there. I'm always talking to the shop owners who are there early in the morning, just opening up.

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00:27:38.400 --> 00:27:41.970

Rory Fukuda: and just by talking to them. I find there's

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00:27:42.830 --> 00:27:47.190

Rory Fukuda: so many things that they're struggling with, you know. It's just

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00:27:47.900 --> 00:27:52.040

Rory Fukuda: part of being self-employed, I would imagine. So

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00:27:52.190 --> 00:27:56.469

Rory Fukuda: I find myself helping them out in a lot of ways, and in some ways that

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00:27:57.050 --> 00:28:03.330

Rory Fukuda: gives me a sense of, you know, feeling like I'm contributing somehow to Japantown

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00:28:04.620 --> 00:28:08.070

Rory Fukuda: and I've been doing that now for

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00:28:08.170 --> 00:28:20.939

Rory Fukuda: actually quite a few years and every now and then I get somebody coming up to me, saying, you know, every time I see the gate, every time you see the bench. Every time I'm making

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00:28:21.370 --> 00:28:31.890

Rory Fukuda: the mochi or manju I think of you because of the things that I've made for them. And I tried to make things for them on my projects. I tried to make a little bit more personal for them.

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00:28:32.270 --> 00:28:40.450

Rory Fukuda: and um rather than just make a box make gate but, just little things here and there that just

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00:28:41.700 --> 00:28:48.540

Rory Fukuda: kind of contributes and helps out both friends and some businesses and acquaintances downtown.

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00:28:50.460 --> 00:28:59.770

Sean Bridges: So has the space changed, and if the space has changed, how has it affected your community?

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00:29:01.640 --> 00:29:07.520

Rory Fukuda: well, you're talking about Japantown in general. Yeah.

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00:29:07.780 --> 00:29:15.420

Rory Fukuda: I can't speak for the community.

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00:29:15.500 --> 00:29:22.010

Rory Fukuda: but as far as personally change change is good. I mean, it's inevitable.

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00:29:22.180 --> 00:29:29.210

Rory Fukuda: but there's definitely been kind of a revitalization of Japan town

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00:29:29.280 --> 00:29:30.450

Rory Fukuda: in the last

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00:29:31.880 --> 00:29:36.049

Rory Fukuda: 20 years. It's been slow, but you it's noticeable.

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00:29:36.500 --> 00:29:39.809

Rory Fukuda: Shops are coming back.

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00:29:39.910 --> 00:29:50.130

Rory Fukuda: A lot of people in their twenties and thirties now are opening businesses in Japan Town. You see a lot of small pop up stores coming up here and there.

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00:29:50.380 --> 00:29:59.719

Rory Fukuda: where there used to be a cannery. On the other side of the railroad tracks there are now condos and housing. In fact, they just built a

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00:29:59.980 --> 00:30:11.490

Rory Fukuda: 6 story apartment complex, very close to what used to be a city corporate yard, and it just used to be just. They used to just house a bunch of maintenance trucks there.

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00:30:12.250 --> 00:30:20.480

Rory Fukuda: So with the living spaces that are growing in the area, you get a lot of people coming into Japan town.

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00:30:21.230 --> 00:30:22.549

Rory Fukuda: and that kind of

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00:30:22.860 --> 00:30:27.640

Rory Fukuda: pushes, the development of new businesses, new restaurants.

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00:30:27.750 --> 00:30:35.500

Rory Fukuda: you know. And so you've no. I've noticed that in the last 20 years that's definitely growing in that regard.

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00:30:36.020 --> 00:30:37.070

Rory Fukuda: So it's

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00:30:38.280 --> 00:30:39.640

Rory Fukuda: change is good.

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00:30:39.670 --> 00:30:45.289

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, in that sense. But there's also an idea of preserving Japan Town.

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00:30:45.440 --> 00:30:48.810

Rory Fukuda: Everybody uses words like quaint, charming

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00:30:48.950 --> 00:30:50.480

Rory Fukuda: they?

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00:30:50.970 --> 00:31:00.289

Rory Fukuda: People say, you know, this is one of the last few original Japan towns in America. There's only like, I don't know a handful of them left.

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00:31:00.850 --> 00:31:05.680

Rory Fukuda: So there's also that of trying to keep things same, but

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00:31:05.870 --> 00:31:07.790

Rory Fukuda: also changing

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00:31:09.550 --> 00:31:19.169

Sean Bridges: and then with most recent events. How did you see Covid affect the community. And how did that affect like these?

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00:31:19.580 --> 00:31:25.509

Sean Bridges: these generational mom and pop shops that possibly had to close down during that time period?

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00:31:27.560 --> 00:31:32.610

Rory Fukuda: Japan was just like every other place in America.

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00:31:32.810 --> 00:31:33.690

Rory Fukuda: There were.

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00:31:34.990 --> 00:31:40.850

Rory Fukuda: because a lot of some of the places were family owned. A lot of the family owned businesses

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00:31:41.300 --> 00:31:45.460

Rory Fukuda: adapted and coped with Covid.

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00:31:45.600 --> 00:31:48.250

Rory Fukuda: Sure, they had to shut down in some in

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00:31:48.660 --> 00:31:53.090

Rory Fukuda: quite a lot of places. But in general they're still in business today.

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00:31:53.380 --> 00:31:55.450

Rory Fukuda: A lot of the

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00:31:55.620 --> 00:32:03.670

Rory Fukuda: business owners who do not live in Japan Town but own the buildings that work there. Some of those we lost.

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00:32:03.690 --> 00:32:06.159

Rory Fukuda: Yeah. Some of those just never came back.

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00:32:06.360 --> 00:32:11.240

Rory Fukuda: But you're noticing now, after what it's been about 2 or 3 years after Covid.

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00:32:12.050 --> 00:32:18.930

Rory Fukuda: that you're still seeing shop owners now suddenly renovating their restaurants.

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00:32:19.260 --> 00:32:26.319

Rory Fukuda: You still, there's about one or 2 that I still pass by that say they only do take up and fall in orders.

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00:32:26.650 --> 00:32:36.440

Rory Fukuda: so there's no dine in yet, and you see them renovating the restaurants now. And so that's starting to come back. But, like Steve mentioned earlier.

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00:32:36.650 --> 00:32:44.140

Rory Fukuda: you know, the changes is definitely slow. Yeah, it's not fast at all. So, but it's happening. Yeah.

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00:32:45.160 --> 00:32:45.990

Sean Bridges: thank you.

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00:32:49.730 --> 00:32:57.450

Diego Rueda: What does it mean to you to belong to a community and has that definition changed at all over time? In your opinion?

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00:32:59.740 --> 00:33:10.940

Rory Fukuda: I definitely have a sense that I'm somehow connected to well, being

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00:33:10.990 --> 00:33:15.499

Rory Fukuda: my dad being working in Japan Town, going to church in Japan Town.

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00:33:15.690 --> 00:33:21.120

Rory Fukuda: I definitely have some connection there for sure. And I try to maintain that by

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00:33:21.190 --> 00:33:26.600

Rory Fukuda: like, I said, working and helping out in projects in Japan and town.

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00:33:26.860 --> 00:33:32.959

Rory Fukuda: and it's it's

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00:33:33.150 --> 00:33:35.959

Rory Fukuda: more nostalgic now than anything.

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00:33:36.500 --> 00:33:39.080

Rory Fukuda: so

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00:33:39.420 --> 00:33:40.230

Rory Fukuda: but

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00:33:41.590 --> 00:33:43.160

Rory Fukuda: yes, definitely

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00:33:44.010 --> 00:33:50.969

Rory Fukuda: important. Yeah. and what was your question? Was the second part of the question.

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00:33:51.720 --> 00:33:59.809

Diego Rueda: I was asking like what it means to view the belong to a community. And if that's changed like over time.

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00:34:00.280 --> 00:34:08.440

Rory Fukuda: it's definitely has some meaning for me. Because it's per very personal.

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00:34:08.570 --> 00:34:10.549

Has it changed?

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00:34:11.540 --> 00:34:15.099

Rory Fukuda: not really no

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00:34:15.159 --> 00:34:22.980

Rory Fukuda: you know, even though Japan has changed you know.

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00:34:23.570 --> 00:34:26.489

Rory Fukuda: everybody else changes with it, and you know.

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00:34:27.020 --> 00:34:30.709

Rory Fukuda: And so that's good. Yeah, I don't know if there's any big.

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00:34:32.929 --> 00:34:35.480

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, that's pretty much it. Yeah.

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00:34:38.230 --> 00:34:47.829

Steve Nava: Christine had a question to add, which is, can we? She? She wants to know. What do you think is important to preserve in Japantown? And why

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00:34:48.030 --> 00:34:52.270

Steve Nava: like what aspects of it? Do you feel like are worth really

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00:34:52.750 --> 00:34:55.739

Steve Nava: expending energy to preserve?

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00:34:58.340 --> 00:35:05.999

Rory Fukuda: Mostly it's the history. There's a lot of unknown history in Japantown a lot of families who were there

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00:35:06.180 --> 00:35:09.010

Rory Fukuda: before the war and who came back.

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00:35:09.390 --> 00:35:14.099

Rory Fukuda: Lot of property owners. There's still a lot of original property owners.

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00:35:14.150 --> 00:35:20.690

Rory Fukuda: Some are involved, some aren't. But just preserving the history of Japantown. Mmm. Things like

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00:35:21.150 --> 00:35:24.540

Rory Fukuda: the [Japanese American Museum](#). which

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00:35:25.830 --> 00:35:28.770

Rory Fukuda: just, you know, just recently has.

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00:35:29.230 --> 00:35:36.709

Rory Fukuda: I mean, they've been there for what about 20 years now which in the big scheme of things is recent.

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00:35:36.880 --> 00:35:48.139

Rory Fukuda: They're helping to help preserve. You know, the identity of Japantown, and for me the Japan town is mostly about the business owners.

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00:35:48.470 --> 00:35:57.610

Rory Fukuda: the longtime business owners who've been there the people that my father were friends with and then kids that I grew up with, who lived around there.

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00:35:58.970 --> 00:35:59.920

Rory Fukuda: So?

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00:36:00.030 --> 00:36:11.420

Steve Nava: if any, how do you account for a changing sense of community?

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00:36:11.890 --> 00:36:12.970

Steve Nava: how do you?

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00:36:13.740 --> 00:36:19.810

Steve Nava: How do you account for the transformation of how we think about community or how you think about community?

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00:36:19.830 --> 00:36:26.420

Steve Nava: What do you think is shaping all this or what forces do you feel like are shaping the change.

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00:36:32.770 --> 00:36:39.129

Rory Fukuda: I don't know what's causing that. I notice that you know a lot of, I don't know if

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00:36:39.580 --> 00:36:46.210

Rory Fukuda: you guys hear this very much, but when you start talking to people in Japantown a lot of times.

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00:36:46.440 --> 00:36:50.380

Rory Fukuda: people will say things like, and I hear this a lot.

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00:36:50.580 --> 00:37:02.589

Rory Fukuda: "Wow! It's really nice to see young people interested in this. It's really nice to see young people doing this. It's really nice to see people of your generation getting involved,"

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00:37:02.940 --> 00:37:10.940

Rory Fukuda: [which kind of tells me, maybe, that my generation kind of dropped the ball on that in regards to](#)

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00:37:10.950 --> 00:37:13.920

Rory Fukuda: [keeping the memory](#)

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00:37:13.950 --> 00:37:20.390

Rory Fukuda: preserving things. So, it's there's this sudden. I've

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00:37:20.870 --> 00:37:24.570

Rory Fukuda: [personally noticed this sudden interest](#)

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00:37:25.000 --> 00:37:31.110

Rory Fukuda: [in history preservation](#). you know, community

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00:37:31.300 --> 00:37:32.939

Rory Fukuda: where

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00:37:34.590 --> 00:37:43.070

Rory Fukuda: in the seventies and early eighties, there wasn't much of that not for me, anyway. Yeah. yeah.

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00:37:44.440 --> 00:37:46.130

Steve Nava: yeah, that that's interesting.

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00:37:46.400 --> 00:37:50.350

Steve Nava: In terms of thinking about generations and their

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00:37:51.050 --> 00:37:58.239

Steve Nava: zeitgeist or the spirit of their time. Maybe the sixties and seventies is a time that

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00:37:58.390 --> 00:38:02.140

Steve Nava: you might speak to that a little bit, like what was the

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00:38:03.330 --> 00:38:07.119

Steve Nava: the attitude or the spirit of that time

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00:38:07.380 --> 00:38:12.529

Steve Nava: when you were in your late teens and early twenties? Spirit of that age.

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00:38:13.820 --> 00:38:15.970

Rory Fukuda: I think a lot of it.

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00:38:17.260 --> 00:38:33.909

Rory Fukuda: It was more of a San Jose thing. San Jose was expanding like. I remember when I was in elementary school, and we would drive. There would be population signs at the city limits, and I remember seeing the population of San Jose being like

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00:38:34.980 --> 00:38:40.220

Rory Fukuda: 95,000 people 105,000 people

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00:38:40.380 --> 00:38:48.790

Rory Fukuda: in throughout the sixties. That's pretty much what it was. And then suddenly, in the seventies, he saw 200,000 people, 500,000 people. Pretty soon,

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00:38:48.810 --> 00:38:56.179

Rory Fukuda: by the mid seventies, it was over 1 million. you know, living in San Jose, and I think

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00:38:57.460 --> 00:38:58.400

Rory Fukuda: the

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00:38:59.500 --> 00:39:01.819

Rory Fukuda: the expansion of San Jose.

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00:39:02.040 --> 00:39:10.890

Rory Fukuda: the urban sprawl beyond downtown. Well, the setup of the Valley Fair Mall, you know.

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00:39:10.980 --> 00:39:15.310

Rory Fukuda: all these malls were popping up everywhere.

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00:39:15.330 --> 00:39:21.820

Rory Fukuda: people weren't hanging around in the central downtown area, which included Japantown. They,

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00:39:22.180 --> 00:39:24.580

Rory Fukuda: you know, so

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00:39:25.080 --> 00:39:33.970

Rory Fukuda: we were like Diego is saying, you know I don't know much about, I haven't noticed Japantown that much, and that's kind of, because there's so much on the periphery

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00:39:34.960 --> 00:39:36.970

Rory Fukuda: you know, there's so much more

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00:39:38.080 --> 00:39:47.489

Rory Fukuda: stimulation and everything outside of that area that until you like, stop and say, you know or think about the history. Think about what

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00:39:47.750 --> 00:39:52.660

Rory Fukuda: was going on in Japantown that you don't really see it. Yeah.

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00:39:54.250 --> 00:39:57.019

Rory Fukuda: But yeah, the seventies were kind of

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00:39:58.310 --> 00:40:14.050

Rory Fukuda: yeah. Japan town wasn't much then there was like, maybe one or two restaurants, if that and one of them was a Chinese restaurant and no shops, no beauty salons, no gas stations. There were two gas stations that were abandoned.

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00:40:14.440 --> 00:40:17.569

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, it was just church

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00:40:17.830 --> 00:40:24.750

Rory Fukuda: pretty much, and there were like 4 were 5 different churches around in Japantown, actually.

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00:40:28.780 --> 00:40:40.680

Steve Nava: You kind of already addressed the question about the neighborhood and your sort of routine. But I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about specific businesses or places that you go to in Japantown that you feel

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00:40:40.820 --> 00:40:44.919

Steve Nava: are really significant in terms of their story. The history.

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00:40:48.680 --> 00:40:52.700

Rory Fukuda: There's a handful of places in Japan and that have been owned

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00:40:53.050 --> 00:40:59.910

Rory Fukuda: like even before the war. Families had owned those stores, and then, when they came back

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00:40:59.970 --> 00:41:01.270

Rory Fukuda: after [internment] camp

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00:41:02.160 --> 00:41:08.909

Rory Fukuda: they reopened the stores. I guess the stores were. I don't know the history behind what happened during the war, but

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00:41:08.970 --> 00:41:11.699

Rory Fukuda: these have been in the same families for

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00:41:12.340 --> 00:41:16.809

Rory Fukuda: as long as I can remember, like I said, even before the war.

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00:41:16.980 --> 00:41:20.200

Rory Fukuda: [Santo Market](#).

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00:41:21.040 --> 00:41:22.390

Rory Fukuda: on Hedding

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00:41:23.590 --> 00:41:25.770

[Kogura Gift Store](#)

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00:41:25.960 --> 00:41:35.340

Rory Fukuda: on Sixth and Jackson. NB. We used to call it NB store, [Nichi Bei](#)

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00:41:35.410 --> 00:41:37.940

Rory Fukuda: [Bussan Store](#).

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00:41:38.170 --> 00:41:42.900

Rory Fukuda: on Jackson Street, between third and Fourth

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00:41:45.080 --> 00:41:52.890

Rory Fukuda: and [Roy's Station](#). which had since was a gas station, has since been renovated into a coffee shop.

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00:41:54.410 --> 00:41:57.919

Rory Fukuda: Those 4, is it? 4? Yeah.

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00:41:57.930 --> 00:42:00.390

Rory Fukuda: Oh, and the

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00:42:00.540 --> 00:42:01.820

Rory Fukuda: [Manju shop](#).

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00:42:02.840 --> 00:42:08.060

Rory Fukuda: Those were the only family run stores that are still in the same families.

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00:42:08.650 --> 00:42:11.640

Rory Fukuda: you know, and those when you go in they just

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00:42:12.280 --> 00:42:20.239

Rory Fukuda: a lot of them. They haven't changed a lot. Yeah. And so those places have meaning the other places

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00:42:21.280 --> 00:42:30.700

Rory Fukuda: for just memories pretty much. You know, a lot of the buildings are still the same, but the store fronts are very different. The businesses are very, very different now.

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00:42:31.330 --> 00:42:32.510

Rory Fukuda: But

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00:42:33.030 --> 00:42:40.230

Rory Fukuda: yeah, there's a nostalgia there, cause even when I go there. When I'm talking to friends in Japan

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00:42:40.580 --> 00:42:43.149

Rory Fukuda: we end up talking about or remember when

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00:42:43.600 --> 00:42:56.249

Rory Fukuda: Jim used to run the grocery store here. Now it's a nail salon, remember, when so and so open to, you know. a pharmacy here and now it's a golf shop, you know, things like that. We're always talking like that.

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00:42:56.640 --> 00:43:05.360

Rory Fukuda: but yeah, but there's still a few family run places in Japan now that if you were to go in.

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00:43:06.130 --> 00:43:10.219

Rory Fukuda: it's yeah straight out of the sixties. It really hasn't changed.

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00:43:10.540 --> 00:43:11.250

Rory Fukuda: Yeah.

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00:43:11.820 --> 00:43:23.400

Steve Nava: What? What kind of conversations did you have during covid with those business owners of those 5 spots of any. If you did have some conversations about the effects of Covid on their

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00:43:23.650 --> 00:43:26.470

Steve Nava: their business or their on the third.

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00:43:27.180 --> 00:43:28.530

how they were doing

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00:43:29.130 --> 00:43:33.030

Rory Fukuda: most of the conversations were just in passing.

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00:43:33.210 --> 00:43:43.049

Rory Fukuda: I would get answers like, Yeah, it's really rough. Yeah, we hate be only open for 3 or 4 days a week. Those kinds of things.

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00:43:44.930 --> 00:43:46.190

Rory Fukuda: but

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00:43:48.150 --> 00:43:51.949

Rory Fukuda: many of the families that I knew

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00:43:52.570 --> 00:44:02.090

Rory Fukuda: just survived. They were able to just change, like I think [Santo's grocery store](#) ended up

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00:44:02.210 --> 00:44:18.029

Rory Fukuda: not selling groceries, but ended up selling sandwiches and food. In fact, they have a big lunch thing now, and they had an outdoor. They built an outdoor window. Take out window, and that's where they were serving food during Covid.

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00:44:19.180 --> 00:44:23.200

Rory Fukuda: Roy Station was still serving coffee during Covid

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00:44:23.640 --> 00:44:28.640

Rory Fukuda: and they basically created an outdoor

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00:44:28.790 --> 00:44:31.410

Rory Fukuda: takeout window. you know

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00:44:31.930 --> 00:44:35.449

Rory Fukuda: as well. So a lot of people just adapted

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00:44:35.920 --> 00:44:37.180

Rory Fukuda: But

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00:44:37.620 --> 00:44:41.039

Rory Fukuda: yeah, I, personally don't know how they survived.

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00:44:41.600 --> 00:44:43.830

Rory Fukuda: you know. But they did. Yeah.

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00:44:46.480 --> 00:44:54.590

Steve Nava: And since you do know these folks pretty well, from what I can tell, could you talk a little bit about

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00:44:55.290 --> 00:45:01.709

Steve Nava: those particular families, and how you related to them like, say, the Santo market folks like, how did you know them? And

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00:45:02.160 --> 00:45:13.170

Rory Fukuda: did you go to school with some of them or like, what was the connection? Yeah, I grew up with them. I grew up with, some of them, some of the kids, yeah.

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00:45:16.050 --> 00:45:17.029

Rory Fukuda: yeah. Like

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00:45:17.300 --> 00:45:26.179

Rory Fukuda: Princess Roy Station, I went to high school, actually, with the kids, the guys who are now owners of the gas station. They

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00:45:26.330 --> 00:45:28.250

Rory Fukuda: bought the property from

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00:45:29.550 --> 00:45:34.000

Rory Fukuda: the wife's father, Carole.

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00:45:34.280 --> 00:45:45.840

Rory Fukuda: and so now they run the gas station, now on their own, and so I'm more closer to them, going to high school with them the others shops. I was mostly

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00:45:47.030 --> 00:45:52.500

Rory Fukuda: I went to Junior high with them. But kind of lost touch with them. Yeah.

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00:45:54.230 --> 00:45:55.180

Rory Fukuda: But

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00:46:00.130 --> 00:46:06.839

Steve Nava: and how what do you know about the [Koguro](#) family or the family that runs Kogura Road?

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00:46:07.320 --> 00:46:17.680

Rory Fukuda: not much. I went to Junior High with the daughter, and she still runs the store right now. I think, with along with the brothers. But yeah.

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00:46:19.550 --> 00:46:25.280

Rory Fukuda: yeah, I guess the only people I am really close with would be Roy's station.

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00:46:26.240 --> 00:46:28.099

Rory Fukuda: the rest family.

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00:46:28.160 --> 00:46:31.600

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, they're the ones who run the shop now.

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00:46:31.720 --> 00:46:32.530

Rory Fukuda: Yeah.

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00:46:33.890 --> 00:46:40.799

Steve Nava: And the who is who is the person who runs Kogura, and you know, what do you know about?

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00:46:41.880 --> 00:46:46.649

Rory Fukuda: I think Kogura is run by, I think

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00:46:48.100 --> 00:46:55.629

Rory Fukuda: think it's Jim Kogura, and I went to school with the Debbie Kogura, and they they're there. So it's a family run.

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00:46:56.040 --> 00:47:01.920

Rory Fukuda: I lost touch with them a few years ago, so I don't know what's going on with them so far.

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00:47:04.710 --> 00:47:08.160

Rory Fukuda: NB. Department stores run by

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00:47:09.260 --> 00:47:18.229

Rory Fukuda: Arlene, her married name is Tetsuna. That's her father ran the store, and now she's

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00:47:18.380 --> 00:47:24.950

Rory Fukuda: running the store, and I think her last name is Arlene. I think it's Damon DAMON

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00:47:25.510 --> 00:47:33.740

Rory Fukuda: and you said you did some work for the Manju

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00:47:33.750 --> 00:47:40.040

Rory Fukuda: the people that run Manju. I do. I still do. Laundry shop is run by

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00:47:40.360 --> 00:47:41.929

Rory Fukuda: Judy and Tom

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00:47:41.950 --> 00:47:44.450

Rory Fukuda: Kumamaru, KUMAMARU

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00:47:45.530 --> 00:47:47.950

Rory Fukuda: yeah.

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00:47:49.080 --> 00:47:51.460

Rory Fukuda: Yeah.

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00:47:52.700 --> 00:47:53.390

Rory Fukuda: And uh.

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00:47:55.840 --> 00:48:08.349

Rory Fukuda: And I build well, in passing while walking by I would talk to Tom, and he has for his Manju shop, he has these steam boxes. They're called *seiro boxes*, SEIRO.

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00:48:08.940 --> 00:48:23.229

Rory Fukuda: And we were talking, and I go. "How are things," and this is all fine, but he goes. I need to get some more boxes, because the steam boxes are just breaking down. I go, really.

"Where do you get them?" He goes. I order them from Japan.

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00:48:23.320 --> 00:48:30.019

Rory Fukuda: and he goes, "and they cost me an arm and a leg." I go, "What are they made of?" and he goes, "wood."

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00:48:30.370 --> 00:48:40.280

Rory Fukuda: I go. and I have a workshop in my garage. I says, well, I can make those boxes for you and so that's what I do

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00:48:40.650 --> 00:48:47.159

Rory Fukuda: is now for the last 8 years. Now I supply him with all the wood steam boxes that he uses

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00:48:47.700 --> 00:48:53.460

Rory Fukuda: to steam the manju and to make them. In fact, I'm making some right now.

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00:48:54.350 --> 00:49:01.469

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, so he just New Year's Day. He asked me if I could make a few more boxes for him, so I'm making them right now.

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00:49:02.480 --> 00:49:05.280

Steve Nava: So how many projects do you have going right now?

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00:49:06.740 --> 00:49:15.139

Rory Fukuda: I've got right now. I've got the maju shop boxes that I'm doing right now, and that's the only one right now. Usually there's

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00:49:15.610 --> 00:49:18.309

Rory Fukuda: always a project coming up

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00:49:18.840 --> 00:49:22.569

Rory Fukuda: before that. It was

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00:49:23.850 --> 00:49:31.870

Rory Fukuda: not so much tied to the Japan community. But I made a doll house for one of my friend's kids. That was about a 4-month project

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00:49:32.590 --> 00:49:37.250

Rory Fukuda: New Years. I did a bobble head to commemorate.

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00:49:37.570 --> 00:49:43.830

Rory Fukuda: the owner of Roy Station! What he does is

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00:49:44.530 --> 00:49:47.039

Rory Fukuda: he comes to work every morning.

469

00:49:47.870 --> 00:49:53.889

Rory Fukuda: and I don't know if you've ever been through Japantown early in the morning, but the owner, once he sets up shop.

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00:49:54.020 --> 00:50:04.200

Rory Fukuda: sets up the tables. He then sweeps all of Japantown. He's got a garbage can and a broom and his name's Frank Rast.

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00:50:04.570 --> 00:50:08.650

Rory Fukuda: and he cleans Japantown every single day

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00:50:09.340 --> 00:50:19.100

Rory Fukuda: he carries around a bottle, the can of acetone everything, and he wipes off all the graffiti from the buildings. He trims the trees every single day.

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00:50:20.760 --> 00:50:22.140

Rory Fukuda: So Frank Rast

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00:50:22.830 --> 00:50:27.330

Rory Fukuda: is married to [Carole Murotsune](#) and the Murotsune's own

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00:50:27.780 --> 00:50:28.660

Rory Fukuda: that

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00:50:28.790 --> 00:50:36.219

Rory Fukuda: Fifth and Jackson corner where Roy Station is, and Frank and Carole were in High School, and they got married

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00:50:36.650 --> 00:50:41.330

Rory Fukuda: and they bought the property from Carole's father.

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00:50:42.220 --> 00:51:10.720

Sean Bridges: hmm, yeah, thank you for sharing that, I think, how has the community resilience been during like economic hardship, such as like the 2008 recession. Obviously, most recently, Covid and I'm curious about this because I just moved here from Louisiana. I lived there for 5 years. And I would arguably say that probably one of the most resilient

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00:51:11.370 --> 00:51:27.729

Sean Bridges: communities within the United States, because they always get hit by natural disasters, floods, winds, and you know the government's very slow to respond at times with aid so, people are really the only things that can come to [support] each other. So

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00:51:27.830 --> 00:51:31.960

Sean Bridges: how has the community around Japantown and within it

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00:51:32.690 --> 00:51:36.690

Sean Bridges: survived and, you know, gone through this?

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00:51:38.400 --> 00:51:45.030

Rory Fukuda: Uh, during 2008,

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00:51:47.370 --> 00:51:55.520

Rory Fukuda: I didn't notice anything in Japantown changing a whole lot. If businesses were hit...

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00:51:56.630 --> 00:52:04.309

Rory Fukuda: yeah, I don't recall exactly if any business actually shut down due to that

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00:52:04.810 --> 00:52:12.910

Rory Fukuda: during Covid a lot of places closed because of Covid, but temporarily.

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00:52:13.160 --> 00:52:15.650

Rory Fukuda: But I don't. I didn't notice any

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00:52:16.160 --> 00:52:20.890

Rory Fukuda: businesses actually folding up.

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00:52:21.970 --> 00:52:29.630

Rory Fukuda: You know some of your other people you interview, like Tamiko Rast might have better insight on how the business has worked

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00:52:29.680 --> 00:52:31.360

Rory Fukuda: did on during those

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00:52:31.940 --> 00:52:40.509

Rory Fukuda: from crisis. Like I said, the only thing I noticed that was it hit Japantown really hard was just in the seventies

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00:52:40.660 --> 00:52:42.260

Rory Fukuda: when I think it was.

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00:52:43.250 --> 00:52:49.950

Rory Fukuda: It wasn't so much an economical crisis during seventies, although there was a recession and a gas shortage.

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00:52:50.140 --> 00:52:52.590

Rory Fukuda: I think it was more of a,

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00:52:55.270 --> 00:52:59.219

Rory Fukuda: from what I noticed, more of a generational change a shift.

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00:52:59.540 --> 00:53:07.559

Rory Fukuda: older generations not being able to carry on with the business, and it was a matter of whether the younger generations picked it up or not.

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00:53:07.970 --> 00:53:12.609

Rory Fukuda: or they had to sort. If not, then they had to sell property type of thing.

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00:53:13.950 --> 00:53:17.470

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, so as far as 2008 and Covid

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00:53:17.730 --> 00:53:21.820

Rory Fukuda: from my perspective, it seemed that

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00:53:22.430 --> 00:53:28.389

Rory Fukuda: people were coping and surviving, I think, in San Jose hightech was hit the hardest.

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00:53:28.420 --> 00:53:34.509

Rory Fukuda: There you saw people losing jobs there you saw buildings emptying out and for lease.

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00:53:34.660 --> 00:53:37.020

Rory Fukuda: but didn't see that

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00:53:37.170 --> 00:53:42.659

Rory Fukuda: much in regards to the private business owners in Japantown.

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00:53:45.280 --> 00:54:04.899

Sean Bridges: I feel that I feel that way about when I lived in Louisiana, too, because you would see these small communities of people like, you know, the shops that have been there for generations. They just, they open back up to the community, and they're there for them. So thank you for that. I appreciate it.

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00:54:04.980 --> 00:54:09.910

Rory Fukuda: I think the bigger you are, the harder you fall. I think it's kind of thing. Yeah.

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00:54:14.060 --> 00:54:17.049

Steve Nava: I wanna ask a question.

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00:54:17.080 --> 00:54:26.159

Steve Nava: about the future of Japantown and but a. And after that I wanna see if the students have any other follow up questions. But I'll go ahead and

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00:54:26.280 --> 00:54:35.399

Steve Nava: ask this question is what do you think is the future of Japantown? What do you think it's gonna be like in throughout this next decade?

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00:54:37.070 --> 00:54:38.829

Steve Nava: Do you think it's gonna change?

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00:54:41.350 --> 00:54:45.680

Rory Fukuda: I've talked to a few people, and they were there

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00:54:46.060 --> 00:54:51.150

Rory Fukuda: saying that like. There's a

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00:54:51.320 --> 00:55:04.239

Rory Fukuda: sort of a community or business community like I told you about the Japantown Business Association that Tamiko Rast is president of, and she might be able to speak about this better. But I have a sense that

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00:55:05.040 --> 00:55:07.880

Rory Fukuda: there's a sense of wanting to grow

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00:55:09.110 --> 00:55:13.940

Rory Fukuda: not so much outwardly, but grow,

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00:55:14.940 --> 00:55:20.720

Rory Fukuda: you know, community sense wise and but at the same time keeping it the same.

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00:55:22.200 --> 00:55:25.470

Rory Fukuda: there's a lot of

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00:55:26.170 --> 00:55:27.419

Rory Fukuda: And I think

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00:55:28.710 --> 00:55:42.500

Rory Fukuda: I think I see this coming, that a lot of the buildings in Japantown, they are just original and I've been in some of them up in the attics and in the back.

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00:55:43.490 --> 00:55:52.899

Rory Fukuda: And it seems inevitable that sooner or later there's going to be this major renovation of the buildings in Japantown.

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00:55:53.710 --> 00:55:56.280

Rory Fukuda: So the trick, I guess, would be

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00:55:56.360 --> 00:56:04.679

Rory Fukuda: if they do this major renovation in Japantown with the old buildings, you know. How are they going to do that and still

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00:56:04.770 --> 00:56:12.770

Rory Fukuda: keep everybody happy in preserving the look of Japantown? Because there are a lot of things behind these buildings, where

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00:56:12.830 --> 00:56:14.920

Rory Fukuda: you have houses

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00:56:15.040 --> 00:56:18.109

Rory Fukuda: literally connected to the backs of the buildings.

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00:56:18.250 --> 00:56:24.309

Rory Fukuda: That are used as store rooms where nobody lives. And so they've been sitting there for decades.

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00:56:24.570 --> 00:56:36.350

Rory Fukuda: and I think it's just a matter of time before you know some new business owner or some new building owner says, you know, we gotta take care of this, and we've got to remove it

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00:56:36.750 --> 00:56:38.010

Rory Fukuda: and renovated.

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00:56:38.220 --> 00:56:40.470

Rory Fukuda: you know, and that'll be kind of tricky

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00:56:41.010 --> 00:56:42.770

Rory Fukuda: keeping everybody happy.

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00:56:52.950 --> 00:56:56.990

Steve Nava: Are there any follow-up questions for many of our

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00:56:57.720 --> 00:57:00.530

Steve Nava: students here? Student researchers?

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00:57:03.630 --> 00:57:14.580

Christine: I just wanted to know. Like, if you think there's something kind of like overlooked about Japantown, that, like a lot of people in San Jose, might not really

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00:57:14.680 --> 00:57:26.409

Christine: see the importance of it but, maybe, like you or someone else that has been in the community kind of feels more connected to like, you'll be able to see that importance better kinda?

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00:57:28.260 --> 00:57:29.090

Rory Fukuda: hmm.

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00:57:38.460 --> 00:57:43.069

Rory Fukuda: I know there's like a group of people who are trying to

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00:57:44.510 --> 00:57:51.490

Rory Fukuda: get the word out, you know, about Japantown trying to give it a sense of community in a way,

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00:57:51.630 --> 00:57:54.419

Rory Fukuda: because a lot of....

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00:57:55.810 --> 00:58:00.829

Rory Fukuda: something on most of the business owners, a lot of them don't live in Japantown

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00:58:01.720 --> 00:58:10.059

Rory Fukuda: And even though the ones that grew up there don't live in Japantown. So, there's this

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00:58:11.800 --> 00:58:20.160

Rory Fukuda: strange kind of people on the outside wanting to preserve what's on the inside.

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00:58:20.940 --> 00:58:23.980

Rory Fukuda: and

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00:58:25.000 --> 00:58:26.050

Rory Fukuda: but

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00:58:27.150 --> 00:58:35.469

Rory Fukuda: there is a sense of. It's an unusual sense of community. It's not like it's a small town where everybody lives there.

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00:58:35.570 --> 00:58:40.960

Rory Fukuda: everybody actually lives outside of Japantown, which is, is

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00:58:41.430 --> 00:58:42.759

Rory Fukuda: the way it is.

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00:58:43.110 --> 00:58:54.620

Rory Fukuda: And yet what brings people to Japantown are the festivals and things like that? And so oftentimes a lot of the organizers.

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00:58:55.450 --> 00:59:04.819

Rory Fukuda: try to find ways like the festivals, to bring more people into Japan and get it. For instance, this weekend.

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00:59:04.830 --> 00:59:08.630

Rory Fukuda: although lunar New year is not exactly a Japanese thing.

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00:59:08.760 --> 00:59:12.789

Rory Fukuda: There are a few Vietnamese shop owners

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00:59:12.810 --> 00:59:17.590

Rory Fukuda: that are now in Japan town, and they have, you know, asked

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00:59:17.740 --> 00:59:25.330

Rory Fukuda: some of the people in the community. Just can we have a lunar New Year celebration in Japantown? And I think there's something going on

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00:59:25.950 --> 00:59:29.379

Rory Fukuda: this weekend. I don't know if it's Saturday or Sunday.

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00:59:29.990 --> 00:59:38.080

Rory Fukuda: where they're gonna be celebrating new lunar, New Year's, they're gonna have a lion dance and firecrackers and everything going on. And so things like that. People are

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00:59:38.120 --> 00:59:42.199

Rory Fukuda: younger people. Younger shop owners are trying to drum up

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00:59:42.230 --> 00:59:43.290

Rory Fukuda: and

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00:59:43.450 --> 00:59:48.739

Rory Fukuda: and keep the interest on Japantown, and of course their businesses.

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00:59:54.440 --> 00:59:56.160

Christine: Thank you.

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00:59:57.100 --> 01:00:03.750

Steve Nava: That was a really good question. And see if there's other questions like that are different from the students.

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01:00:13.230 --> 01:00:24.329

Steve Nava: I can ask one, and then you can. You can also chime in anyone. What do you feel about? And what is your sense of the history of the murals in Japan?

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01:00:28.530 --> 01:00:29.540

Rory Fukuda: I like them.

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01:00:30.320 --> 01:00:41.730

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, it was. It was a surprising kind of project. I don't know if I guess it was like a project. Suddenly murals started popping up everywhere around Japantown. And this was like about

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01:00:42.490 --> 01:00:43.150

okay.

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01:00:43.640 --> 01:00:47.830

Rory Fukuda: I don't know, ten or fifteen years ago that the first murals started popping up.

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01:00:49.250 --> 01:00:51.950

Rory Fukuda: and I don't know if

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01:00:52.890 --> 01:01:02.800

Rory Fukuda: I don't actually know the history behind them other than I would ask questions about the artists, and there's a few of the artists that I actually know.

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01:01:03.400 --> 01:01:14.250

Rory Fukuda: and they're really good. And it was nice to see some of the art was related to Japantown, but some of the art was not.

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01:01:14.310 --> 01:01:17.960

Rory Fukuda: you know, and that still really was. It was nice to see

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01:01:19.320 --> 01:01:20.320

Rory Fukuda: art

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01:01:20.630 --> 01:01:24.170

Rory Fukuda: in Japantown when there really wasn't any.

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01:01:24.410 --> 01:01:25.300

Rory Fukuda: You know

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01:01:25.670 --> 01:01:34.550

Rory Fukuda: the monuments and the memorials that you see in Japantown have just been very recent, and when I say recent like within the last 20 years

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01:01:35.180 --> 01:01:39.779

Rory Fukuda: hence, again, the seventies, eighties, and nineties were

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01:01:40.090 --> 01:01:45.960

Rory Fukuda: there, weren't, you know, no museums, no monuments, no plaques,

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01:01:46.000 --> 01:01:49.229

Rory Fukuda: no art, you know. So in the last

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01:01:49.360 --> 01:01:56.809

Rory Fukuda: 20 years this has been coming around in Japantown, and it's definitely added a lot to the community for sure.

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01:02:01.770 --> 01:02:03.290

Steve Nava: And also

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01:02:04.110 --> 01:02:11.330

Steve Nava: I was wondering if you noticed any changes in the whole aesthetic or look of those murals like.

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01:02:11.340 --> 01:02:15.259

Steve Nava: do you think there's been a qualitative, qualitative change in the way they

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01:02:15.570 --> 01:02:20.000

Steve Nava: the kind of images they're representing? And what do you think they really mean

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01:02:21.310 --> 01:02:23.190

Rory Fukuda: for folks and for yourself?

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01:02:24.890 --> 01:02:28.110

Rory Fukuda: Every artist has sort of their different take

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01:02:28.600 --> 01:02:35.610

Rory Fukuda: Some of the art is commercial. Some of the art is just way out there.

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01:02:35.930 --> 01:02:42.149

Rory Fukuda: Some of it is very cultural. And there's a weird mix. There's a mix, you know. Sometimes

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01:02:42.560 --> 01:02:54.680

Rory Fukuda: people think, because it's Japantown that it should be somewhat, Asian related Asian oriented. And that's not necessarily a case for Japantown really, I don't think so.

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01:02:55.040 --> 01:02:57.319

Rory Fukuda: So you see, a lot of of

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01:02:57.440 --> 01:03:07.250

Rory Fukuda: Mexican American art. You see a lot of just varying things. So I'm not sure what the [selection process](#) is on the mural, or or if it's

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01:03:07.330 --> 01:03:08.969

Rory Fukuda: up to the artist

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01:03:09.250 --> 01:03:12.709

Rory Fukuda: themselves to determine what is being painted.

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01:03:13.170 --> 01:03:22.169

Rory Fukuda: But yeah, it's varied. And you know, like. kind of, you know, like speaking of, like

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01:03:23.710 --> 01:03:26.630

Rory Fukuda: Asian-specific art.

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01:03:27.180 --> 01:03:41.129

Rory Fukuda: I don't know if this has anything to do with, but like there was a park that was built recently between two apartment buildings. There was a development going, so they built actually a lot nice, really nice park

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01:03:41.290 --> 01:03:44.599

Rory Fukuda: there. And they were going to call it

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01:03:44.810 --> 01:03:46.910

Rory Fukuda: Sakura Park,

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01:03:46.940 --> 01:03:48.640

Rory Fukuda: Cherry Blossom Park.

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01:03:50.520 --> 01:03:53.969

Rory Fukuda: and the developers got a lot of flak for that

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01:03:55.290 --> 01:03:58.150

Rory Fukuda: And actually the

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01:03:58.580 --> 01:04:11.350

Rory Fukuda: owners of Roy Station and I believe, even Tamiko. You might want to ask Tamiko about this. They actually petitioned and fought the city to change the name of Sakura Park

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01:04:12.280 --> 01:04:14.880

Rory Fukuda: to [Heinlenville Park](#).

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01:04:17.070 --> 01:04:21.189

Rory Fukuda: and the reason for that is Heinlen. Actually.

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01:04:22.260 --> 01:04:26.239

Rory Fukuda: the Chinatown used to exist in downtown San Jose

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01:04:27.030 --> 01:04:31.770

Rory Fukuda: and they literally burned the city, the town down

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01:04:31.880 --> 01:04:35.799

Rory Fukuda: and drove the Chinese out of downtown area.

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01:04:36.410 --> 01:04:40.060

Rory Fukuda: And so [John] Heinlen [a German immigrant], who owned a lot of land around Japantown

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01:04:40.840 --> 01:04:44.229

Rory Fukuda: actually offered the Asians

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01:04:44.300 --> 01:04:45.970

Rory Fukuda: a place to stay.

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01:04:47.900 --> 01:04:52.099

Rory Fukuda: and they actually called that area Heinlenville, when it was first developed.

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01:04:53.430 --> 01:04:54.350

Rory Fukuda: So

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01:04:54.830 --> 01:05:00.270

Rory Fukuda: that kind of history, you know, unless you ask people in the neighborhood.

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01:05:00.360 --> 01:05:07.809

Rory Fukuda: oftentimes you get well, it's Japanese. Let's just call it Cherry Blossom Park you know, and just

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01:05:08.110 --> 01:05:17.530

Rory Fukuda: settle for that. So some of the things that the community did a handful of people. They actually petitioned the city to change the name of the park.

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01:05:17.560 --> 01:05:21.480

Rory Fukuda: and they literally had to go down to the city and

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01:05:22.410 --> 01:05:25.689

Rory Fukuda: state their case on. Why? Heinlerville.

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01:05:26.140 --> 01:05:33.210

Rory Fukuda: yeah. You know, in a time where you see a lot of names of schools being changed because they found out that the

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01:05:33.320 --> 01:05:47.289

Rory Fukuda: the schools were named after people who were somewhat racist or inappropriate during the turn in the century. You know, this is one guy who actually helped the Asians develop a town, a Japantown.

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01:05:47.750 --> 01:05:51.520

Rory Fukuda: For before that it was a Chinatown. Actually. yeah.

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01:05:54.190 --> 01:06:13.199

Steve Nava: Yeah, so we have about 7 min. And I do. I do wanna share some images that I pulled from your work of the miniatures, and I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the motivation for creating miniatures that are specific to Japantown.

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01:06:13.390 --> 01:06:19.069

Rory Fukuda: What? What do you? What was your motivation? And like

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01:06:19.650 --> 01:06:24.590

Steve Nava: And you know, what? What do you think about this this overall project?

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01:06:24.970 --> 01:06:28.179

Steve Nava: You know how you felt in the beginning and how you felt afterwards.

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01:06:29.080 --> 01:06:30.040

Rory Fukuda: Sure.

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01:06:30.670 --> 01:06:34.070

Rory Fukuda: um.

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01:06:34.880 --> 01:06:37.850

Rory Fukuda: The way the project just started was actually.

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01:06:37.950 --> 01:06:40.170

Rory Fukuda: I wanted to test

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01:06:40.900 --> 01:06:42.640

Rory Fukuda: my 3D printers.

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01:06:43.420 --> 01:06:49.599

Rory Fukuda: in my, in my work. I would. I built models

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01:06:49.830 --> 01:06:53.819

Rory Fukuda: for a living on top of everything else that I did. And so

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01:06:55.830 --> 01:06:59.910

Rory Fukuda: oftentimes, when I'm in between projects

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01:07:00.550 --> 01:07:07.380

Rory Fukuda: I'm racking my brain to figure out, well, what am I going to do now? What's fun? What can I do. you know? And one of things was

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01:07:07.940 --> 01:07:11.790

Rory Fukuda: my cousin mentioned a virtual reality

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01:07:11.820 --> 01:07:16.459

Rory Fukuda: or an [augmented reality project](#) at the Museum of

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01:07:16.490 --> 01:07:22.890

Rory Fukuda: [Japanese Museum](#) was doing in Japantown, you know, and there it was a more of an art installation thing.

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01:07:23.150 --> 01:07:26.729

Rory Fukuda: and that got me my mind thinking.

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01:07:28.340 --> 01:07:37.209

Rory Fukuda: Well, I don't want to just make print something on the 3D printer. I just don't want to just print a big sail fine, and then toss it. Let's, you know, I want to do something

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01:07:37.580 --> 01:07:42.139

Rory Fukuda: that has [any kind of meaning](#), and it took me a few days to

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01:07:42.280 --> 01:07:51.239

Rory Fukuda: figure out well, what is it that I want to print? What is it that I want to make in walking? You know I walk every day in Japantown with my dog.

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01:07:51.450 --> 01:07:55.420

Rory Fukuda: And so I thought. The buildings! These are buildings that

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01:07:55.840 --> 01:08:00.789

Rory Fukuda: you know. In 10 or 20 years from now, it may be, may look totally different.

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01:08:01.330 --> 01:08:06.719

Rory Fukuda: But there's some nostalgia that goes along with these buildings.

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01:08:07.650 --> 01:08:19.670

Rory Fukuda: But and they're very recognizable. When I was surprised when I posted these pics online. The reaction I got.

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01:08:20.029 --> 01:08:32.700

Rory Fukuda: I honestly didn't expect that I actually was trying to see if maybe I could get rid of these buildings if anybody wanted them. So because I've got a ton of stuff like this on my shelves that

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01:08:32.779 --> 01:08:33.880

Rory Fukuda: you know. Just

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01:08:33.920 --> 01:08:38.810

Rory Fukuda: if anybody wants them or as anybody's interested here you go? Yeah.

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01:08:39.250 --> 01:08:42.469

Rory Fukuda: So yeah. The previous was a

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01:08:42.520 --> 01:08:46.780

Rory Fukuda: the San Jose Japanese American Museum. This is the Buddhist church.

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01:08:47.490 --> 01:08:53.679

Rory Fukuda: and so I would. 3D print all of this.

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01:08:53.990 --> 01:08:58.370

Rory Fukuda: and of course it just comes out as a monochrome model.

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01:08:59.040 --> 01:09:09.020

Rory Fukuda: But yeah, I just can't just leave it like that. So, I started painting them, and then once he started with one, then I did another, and another, you know, and

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01:09:09.649 --> 01:09:11.110

Rory Fukuda: no, it was kind of fun.

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01:09:12.090 --> 01:09:16.379

Steve Nava: Has the museum showed interest in displaying them, or

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01:09:16.569 --> 01:09:19.660

Rory Fukuda: I haven't heard from them. So

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01:09:22.380 --> 01:09:30.260

Rory Fukuda: nobody's interested right now. It's weird. Yeah, we're interested, the CHC is interested.

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01:09:30.390 --> 01:09:34.450

Rory Fukuda: Yeah, I mean. That's I'm sure that's why I posted it. Because it's like.

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01:09:35.290 --> 01:09:39.329

Rory Fukuda: well, you know, with projects and me. It's like once I've done a project,

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01:09:40.020 --> 01:09:43.350

Rory Fukuda: you know. I move on to something else.

654

01:09:43.510 --> 01:09:47.090

Rory Fukuda: You know I rarely do the same project twice.

655

01:09:47.380 --> 01:09:50.490

Rory Fukuda: you know, or continue it.

656

01:09:50.760 --> 01:10:02.549

Rory Fukuda: So, but yeah, I actually, I was thinking about doing another model of Japantown, but actually the entire intersection, you know, like an architectural model.

657

01:10:03.210 --> 01:10:06.920

Rory Fukuda: you know. But that's just right. Now, just a thought

658

01:10:08.510 --> 01:10:09.400

Rory Fukuda: so.

659

01:10:09.690 --> 01:10:19.200

Steve Nava: And in terms of like your own ethnic background, like, how much of your ethnic background motivates you to do

660

01:10:19.500 --> 01:10:21.819

Steve Nava: creative acts like this or others

661

01:10:25.000 --> 01:10:32.579

Steve Nava: background, and like how your ethnic background, how do you do you feel like any connection to what you do in life?

662

01:10:33.980 --> 01:10:45.780

Rory Fukuda: You know it's not so much related to my ethnicity so much as it is to my age and it's not that I'm nostalgic,

663

01:10:46.770 --> 01:10:49.460

Rory Fukuda: but every project that I do

664

01:10:50.360 --> 01:10:53.939

Rory Fukuda: like, If somebody asked for a gate.

665

01:10:54.780 --> 01:10:56.849

Rory Fukuda: As an example.

666

01:10:57.290 --> 01:10:59.080

Rory Fukuda: the owners at Roy's Station

667

01:10:59.390 --> 01:11:06.639

Rory Fukuda: wanted to redo their gates, their wooden gates, and their fencing, and they didn't have time to do it.

668

01:11:07.040 --> 01:11:12.039

Rory Fukuda: So they asked me, "Can you redo our fence for us and our gates?" I go, "Sure

669

01:11:12.150 --> 01:11:13.180

Rory Fukuda: no problem."

670

01:11:14.490 --> 01:11:15.410

Rory Fukuda: But

671

01:11:16.860 --> 01:11:25.570

Rory Fukuda: I didn't just do that, but I also said, Hey. I've got a CNC machine. How about if I engrave your family crest

672

01:11:25.660 --> 01:11:28.809

Rory Fukuda: on the gates and the fence boards

673

01:11:29.220 --> 01:11:31.179

Rory Fukuda: make it a little bit more personal.

674

01:11:32.580 --> 01:11:43.840

Rory Fukuda: and every time I request, do something a little bit more personal for people they they can't see it. So oftentimes I have to do use Photoshop to

675

01:11:44.590 --> 01:11:57.039

Rory Fukuda: give em a rendering. Here's what it's going to look like, and they go, "Oh, oh, is that what it's going to look like? I had no idea." And so things like that making projects a little bit more personal for everybody.

676

01:11:57.380 --> 01:12:04.610

Rory Fukuda: The manju shop the same way I did inlay logos on old steam boxes of their shop logo.

677

01:12:04.670 --> 01:12:14.670

Rory Fukuda: I made a bench in Japantown, and I engraved it with some Koi fish and things like that, and engraved the name of the restaurant that it was in front of.

678

01:12:15.000 --> 01:12:15.880

Rory Fukuda: Oh.

679

01:12:16.490 --> 01:12:29.939

Rory Fukuda: you know, and with their family crest on the gates. Now, you know. they say things like, "I wish my father could see these. He would really love the gates cause now it's more than just a gate." It's you know. It's a family gate.

680

01:12:30.410 --> 01:12:34.090

Rory Fukuda: you know something just a little bit more personal.

681

01:12:34.390 --> 01:12:41.770

Rory Fukuda: I like doing that. So I spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to personalize everything.

682

01:12:41.890 --> 01:12:48.190

Rory Fukuda: and I don't sign anything. Everybody asks me to sign it, and I refuse. I don't need to.

683

01:12:48.280 --> 01:12:49.650

Rory Fukuda: It's not my gate,

684

01:12:51.710 --> 01:12:52.700

Rory Fukuda: so.

685

01:12:53.110 --> 01:12:56.139

Rory Fukuda: But yeah, the models were kind of

686

01:12:56.290 --> 01:13:08.380

Rory Fukuda: just an interest one, people love miniatures, especially if they own the building. They just go crazy over these things.

