

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Koremitsu Muraoka

*"It [Lāwa'i Stable Camp] was a plantation camp. There were houses for the plantation laborers and a common furo which everyone used and a small store where the lady made and sold manju and simple Japanese goods. Every day about five p. m. a clerk from the large Kōloa [Plantation] Store came around to take orders. People ordered what they needed and it was delivered to them the following day."*

Koremitsu Muraoka was born in 1899, in Kumamoto-ken, Japan. He was raised in Japan by his grandparents. His parents, Fui and Hiroki Muraoka, immigrated to Hawai'i to work on a sugar plantation. It was not until 1914 that he rejoined his parents in the Islands. At that time they were living in Lāwa'i Stable Camp. In 1915, the family moved to Kōloa.

In Kōloa, Koremitsu helped care for his nine siblings and did some plantation work. At night, he attended English-language and Japanese-language classes. In ca. 1919, he started teaching at Kōloa Nihongo Gakko. He went to Japan in 1931 to receive additional teacher-training. Upon his return in 1932, he resumed teaching. He taught at Kōloa until 1938 when a controversy arose over the principalship. For the next three years, he worked at Kōloa Plantation.

From September to December 1941 he served as principal of Lāwa'i Nihongo Gakko. But, with the outbreak of World War II and the closing of Japanese-language schools, Koremitsu was without a job. He sought and found employment at Kaua'i Pineapple Company--first in the fields, later in the company's experiment station.

Today, he resides in Lāwa'i. His three daughters, all graduates of the University of Hawai'i, are teachers.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Koremitsu Muraoka (KM)

April 8, 1987

Lāwa'i, Kaua'i

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Judith Yamauchi.]

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Koremitsu Muraoka at his home in Lāwa'i, Kaua'i on April 8, 1987. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto. The interview was originally conducted in Japanese.

What was your father's name?

KM: It was Hiroki Muraoka.

MK: What was your mother's name?

KM: It was Fui Muraoka.

MK: Can you explain a little about the livelihood of your parents in Japan?

KM: They were farmers in the backwoods of Kumamoto, so until they came to Hawai'i, they were farmers in Japan. Agricultural work.

MK: What sorts of things did they grow?

KM: In our case, we had more paddy land than dry land, so our main crop was rice. After the rice was harvested, we would plant wheat or plant beans.

MK: How large a paddy did your parents have?

KM: Well, it wasn't very large. On top of that, there were brothers and sisters. Since their mother and father were healthy, there wasn't enough land for all of us in the family to cultivate. For this reason, they came to Hawai'i.

MK: When did they come to Hawai'i?

KM: My mother and father came in 1903--in May.

MK: Where in Hawai'i did they go first?

KM: At the very beginning--at that time, it wasn't contract labor immigration, but free immigration--plantations everywhere were short of laborers, so whenever a group of immigrants would come from Japan, each plantation would request a certain number of them. In Honolulu, there was an immigration company, so this company would assign the workers to specific areas such as Kōloa on the island of Kaua'i, or Līhu'e, etc. In my parents' case, it was the Kekaha Plantation camp in Mānā. That's where they went. Since it was so hot in Mānā, probably after two or three months, they moved to Kōloa where they had some relatives.

MK: Where in Kōloa did they live?

KM: In a plantation camp.

MK: After Kōloa, where did they go?

KM: After about two to three years--I'm not certain of this but--in Kōloa, they went to work at McBryde Plantation at Lāwa'i Stables, an area which later became West Lāwa'i.

MK: You mentioned before that because your mother had a chance to become a cook . . .

KM: Yes, in those days there were many single people coming from Japan. They stayed in the plantation camp and cooked for themselves--there were some who were able to cook for themselves, but there were some Japanese cooks who lived here and there in the camps. Since my mother still didn't have too many children and there was a chance to replace one of the cooks, she went there. But gradually, she had more children and she could no longer be a cook. After that [i.e., when she had two or three young children to care for] she stayed home and took care of the house and reared her children.

MK: In those days, what sort of work did the cook do?

KM: For breakfast there was simply miso soup and rice. Then they made the box lunches and after that they started making preparations for dinner.

MK: About how many did she cook for?

KM: The camp at Lāwa'i Stables was small so probably about five or six.

MK: You previously mentioned that your mother took in laundry . . .

KM: Yes, in those days, the single people couldn't do their own laundry; so she did the laundry for those single people.

MK: You also said you went from Lāwa'i Stables to Kōloa.

KM: Yes. By that time, my two younger brothers and a younger sister were attending Kalāheo public school as well as Lāwa'i Japanese-language School. Since there were no cars in those days and they had to walk fairly long distances, there was concern for their education; after three children had started going to school, they moved to Kōloa.

MK: About when was that?

KM: I can't remember exactly, but probably about 1912 or 1913. Just a minute--we moved to Kōloa in 1915. I came here from Japan in May 1914 and about a year after I came here we moved, so it was about the summer of 1915.

MK: Where were you born?

KM: In Japan in Kumamoto-ken, Kamimashiki-gun, Kashima-mura, Namazu--a farming village about five miles south of Kumamoto-shi. Kumamoto-ken is right in the middle of Kyushu and the place where I was born is right in the middle of Kumamoto-ken--so I was born exactly in the middle of Kyushu.

MK: In your family, which child were you?

KM: I was the eldest son. I alone was left in Japan, and my mother and father came to Hawai'i, and shortly after that my younger brother was born.

MK: After your mother and father came to Hawai'i, who took care of you?

KM: At that time my grandmother and grandfather were still young--that is about sixty--and my uncle and aunt hadn't married yet and were still at home; so after asking my grandfather, grandmother, aunt, and uncle to look after me, my mother and father came to Hawai'i by themselves. This type of thing happened here and there in those days. Saying that if you went to Hawai'i with children you couldn't get any work done, people would leave their children in Japan in their parent's charge and come to Hawai'i.

MK: How old were you then?

KM: When my father and mother came to Hawai'i, I was about three years and three months old.

MK: Do you have any recollection of your mother and father leaving for Hawai'i?

KM: I don't remember it at all. Not at all. After I got a little older, I understood some things from what my grandfather and grandmother told me, but earlier I remembered nothing of my father and mother going to Hawai'i, not even when they left for Hawai'i.

- MK: What did you think when you were small about what your grandfather and grandmother told you about your mother and father?
- KM: Since my grandfather, grandmother, aunt, and uncle were very good to me, I didn't particularly have any feelings of loneliness. Besides, I didn't know anything about my father and mother, and my grandmother treated me with great affection, so I never felt any particular loneliness for my mother or father.
- MK: What sort of place was this Kumamoto-ken where you spent your childhood?
- KM: It was rural so it was all level plain; whenever there was a continuous, heavy rain, it would get flooded over and look like an ocean. Therefore, the houses were built high so that floodwaters wouldn't reach them. During my recollection, we had floods during which we had to live on the second floor of our house. During such times, the young adults of the village seinen-kai would make musubi and takuan and pickled vegetables and distribute them to us.
- MK: Were there many people living around you in your neighborhood?
- KM: Oh, yes. At that time my village had about 250 to 300 houses so it was very large. And these were all clustered together. Although there were streets between the houses and they weren't stuck together like those in plantation camps, the houses in the village were clustered together.
- MK: How did your grandfather and grandmother compare with the others in the village? Were they better off?
- KM: Economically speaking, in our farming village, although perhaps one-fourth were well off, generally they were poor, meager farmers.
- MK: Did your father and mother send money home to you from Hawai'i?
- KM: Yes, for New Year's or for Bon they would send ten or fifteen dollars--in those days ten dollars or fifteen dollars was a lot of money.
- MK: In Japan in those days what sort of celebration was the Bon?
- KM: In our farming village, there was no Bon dancing as we have here, but during Bon, we would clean up the graves and visit the temples and there was a custom by the parents of buying some sort of new clothes, for example a new heko-obi for a boy or a yukata--since Bon is a summer festival--for the young people and the children. In our area, there was no Bon dancing, but we visited the graves and temples and in the family we made a bit of a feast. As much as possible, from the undergarments to the yukata, we changed into something new.
- MK: What about New Year's?

KM: Since we were in the rural areas, we didn't have much of a New Year's. Within the family, before New Year's, we would pound mochi rice and make other goodies and celebrate. In the fall, since most were farmers, after the rice harvest and other crops are in, in the fall, there is a festival in all the villages--a village festival. In our village, every year there was a village sumo. This was not only in our village, but in the various large villages, for a set number of days, there is a festival and sumo was one of the events. And we would invite relatives from neighboring and distant villages and feast and watch the sumo and when they left in the evening, we would send them home with a gift of jūbako filled with mochi, manjū, sekihan, etc. Likewise, when I would go with my grandfather to our relatives' place, we would also return with such a jūbako gift filled with goodies. So the fall festivities were fairly lively and varied.

MK: Were there other celebrations in Japan in those days?

KM: Other than these, in my recollection, there weren't any in our village. The festival was one of the big events and. . . . And during such a festival we would go watch the sumo or visit our relatives. In Japan, there are various places to go worship such as shrines and temples and o-Jizō-san and Kannon-san, so during their special days, the young people would go there even if it involved going two or three ri. There, there would be various displays and selling booths and going there was one of the pleasures for the farmers in Japan.

MK: When you were a child did you work?

KM: As far as work was concerned, when it was planting or harvest time for the rice crop, I used to help. These days all the planting is done mechanically, but in those days, the rice planting and weeding, etc., was done manually by people. In order to plant the rice seedling, they are planted about a foot apart so a rope is pulled across the paddy from each end--one person on each end holds the rope. Red yarn is tied as a marker at one-foot intervals on the rope. The person doing the planting places a rice seedling at each marked point. I used to go to help hold this rope, and in the fall we used a horse to bring in the harvest. My uncle and the others would load the bundled rice and I would lead the horse and we would go home. This is the way I would help.

MK: Other than this, did you work outside?

KM: The most I did outside was to go cut grass for the horses--I never planted or weeded or harvested rice.

MK: Did you go to school?

KM: As far as school is concerned, I was born in February, which was early, so from the time I was seven, eight in those days. In Japan since school starts in April--those who will be eight by April of

that year are eligible to go to school. Since I was born in February which is early, I went to school from the age of seven.

MK: So starting from the age of seven until how old did you go to school?

KM: I went until March of my 14th year. In those days, the farming families discouraged too much schooling with the rationale that education makes one dislike farming. So the parents make the children stop going to school by the fourth or fifth grade. In the fourth or fifth grade the children are still just eleven or twelve and can't really do housework but if there are younger children, they can baby-sit. They can't help in the household, but it is customary to think it is all right for farming children not to have education. Among my classmates, there were about fifty who started school with me, but by the time I graduated, that number was cut by over one-half.

MK: Why were you allowed to go through the higher school [i.e., intermediate school]?

KM: It isn't that I particularly said I wanted to go, but likewise my grandfather and uncle didn't say I couldn't go because I was a farming child. Somewhat by chance I was able to go.

MK: What sorts of things did you study in school?

KM: Since it was a regular elementary school, we learned reading and writing, arithmetic, and in those days there was ethics, geography, history, etc., this was the usual curriculum. But in those days, there was no place that taught English in Japan's elementary or intermediate school, so when I came to Hawai'i, I didn't know my ABC's or counting by 1-2-3's. Fortunately, I had learned arithmetic in the Western style, so even today I find that a great advantage. For my work, I was able to use this arithmetic, and was very happy about that.

MK: Did you have your likes and dislikes in school?

KM: Not particularly, but I didn't like drawing pictures or handwriting since I wasn't very good at it. But I did like arithmetic, geography, history, and reading and got pretty good grades in them.

MK: Did you have a chance to play with your own friends at school?

KM: Well, we didn't have proper toys as such like they do today, but in those days we did things like make spinning tops out of bamboo, cut about a foot-long pieces of wood and sharpen the tips and throw them into the soft marshy land and make them wrestle. If one is knocked over, the winning person takes it. Also there was top spinning. And in the fall, there was kite flying. There was something which somewhat resembled baseball--nothing with strict rules but--we played catch. In those days, they may have had baseball in town,

but in the rural areas we didn't have such a game.

MK: What sort of hopes did you have in those days for when you grew up?

KM: In those days, since we were poor and I didn't think I could go on to high school. . . . For military and naval schools, if you passed an exam, since they are government schools, everything is free. If you didn't pass the most difficult of the tests which is that for the navy, you took the test for the army. If you didn't pass this, the Ministry of Transportation's. . . . At any rate, there was the mercantile marine school where you could become a seaman. So if I didn't pass the naval exam or the army exam, I intended to go to this mercantile marine school. It was at this point that my father in Hawai'i told me that there were schools in Hawai'i which I could attend, so I came to Hawai'i.

MK: When you heard this, what were your thoughts?

KM: Both my grandfather and my grandmother said I didn't have to come to Hawai'i. They had taken such good care of me. Thinking that they would become lonely, they didn't want me to come to Hawai'i. On my part as well, I didn't particularly relish the thought of leaving my grandmother and grandfather and coming to Hawai'i; but since my father insisted on it saying that it was better in Hawai'i, I came to Hawai'i.

MK: Up to that point, what had you heard about Hawai'i?

KM: Just that Hawai'i was a good place. Since it was a different era from today when the trip can [now] be made in five or six hours by airplane, I felt Hawai'i was very far away and, not knowing the conditions in Hawai'i very well--which were very different from the conditions today--I wasn't that anxious to come. Regarding Hawai'i, all I knew was that there were sugar companies here and many Japanese workers had come to work as laborers. I really didn't know very much about it.

MK: In order to come to Hawai'i, did you have many formalities to go through in Japan?

KM: I had to apply to make the voyage at the prefectural office, and in those days, there was the eye test--eighty years ago trachoma was prevalent among children. In order to go to Hawai'i and America, besides this eye test, in the stomach area called the duodenum, people had hookworms--I haven't heard of such cases today--but due to the sanitation conditions and the coarse foods of those days, not only in Japan but throughout the world, because it was an unsanitary era, there were various diseases. In those days amoebic dysentery which caused diarrhea and bloody feces was widespread. In my case I was fortunate in not having experienced this.

MK: After complying with the various formalities, where did you depart from to come to Hawai'i--was it Kobe?

- KM: At one point I did go to Kobe. However, since the tests were difficult to pass in Kobe, I failed them there. That evening I went back to Kumamoto with my uncle. When I told them I couldn't go to Hawai'i because I had failed the eye exam, my grandmother was overjoyed and told me I wouldn't have to go anymore. Both my grandmother and grandfather were happy for me. On my part also, I didn't regret not being able to go to Hawai'i. So because I failed the eye test in Kobe, I returned to Kumamoto, but then my father sent two or three hundred dollars and told me to go to Nagasaki and to depart from Nagasaki. Thus he sent me expense money to cover such a trip. So after three months or so after having my eyes taken care of, I departed from Nagasaki.
- MK: When your father sent this extra money and told you again to come to Hawai'i, what did you think?
- KM: Well, from the beginning I wasn't too anxious to come to Hawai'i and had reluctantly agreed to it; it wasn't something which I had hoped for, but was forced on to me.
- MK: What was it like in Nagasaki?
- KM: From my school days, the school doctor would come to the school to give us eye tests to test for trachoma about twice a year. For those whose cases were serious, an emblem was put on their kimonos with red woolen thread; for those whose cases were milder, a pink emblem using pink woolen thread was attached to their shoulders. I have never had any such designation put on to me and at school had been warned not to use the towels of those who had. In order to come to Hawai'i, I had gone to various eye doctors and, rather than have trachoma, I just had bloodshot eyes. For this reason, I wasn't able to come to Hawai'i the first time. The inn where I stayed in Kobe was called Kuwada Ryokan, but in those days, in the Kobe inns, there were many picture brides from Hiroshima-ken, Yamaguchi-ken, Shikoku, and Chugoku.
- MK: What about in Nagasaki?
- KM: In Nagasaki, there were mainly picture brides from Kumamoto-ken and Fukuoka-ken--but mostly from Kumamoto-ken. In general, people from Kyushu sailed from Nagasaki.
- MK: What did you think of those picture brides?
- KM: Well, I was fifteen years and three months when I came here. At school when I was small, I liked girls who were smart and had good grades. We were just children. But I wasn't of the age where I would love any girl, and the youngest of the brides were twenty years old or so. When they would go shopping into town, they would always take me along. The reason for this was that if one male such as I went along, the people in the town wouldn't tease them. So the young brides of Kumamoto-ken would urge me to go along with them that evening. They were all very kind to me. Not in any romantic

way, but because I was just a youth, they must have thought I was cute. I was liked by everyone and invited to go along with them here and there.

MK: How many days were you in Nagasaki?

KM: Just about one week--for eye tests and test for intestinal worms--we would have to refrain from eating and clear out our stomachs and then take intestinal worm medicine. The elimination of worms could be accomplished in two or three days. But the eyes wouldn't clear up in just a week or two. So in the Kobe inns at that time, there were many people with bloodshot eyes who had failed their eye exams.

MK: So you passed your eye and duodenal exams in Nagasaki?

KM: If you didn't pass these two tests, you couldn't board the ship. So I got on board and came over. I left Nagasaki in the afternoon, but it was night by the time we passed through the open seas. I didn't get seasick and passing through the ocean and entering the Seto Inland Sea, which is as calm as glass, there was no one who got seasick. We stayed one day and one night in Kobe and then set out in the Pacific Ocean. We dropped anchor for two or three hours in Yokkaichi, I believe it's in Mie-ken, and then went on to Yokohama.

MK: From Yokohama . . .

KM: We anchored in Yokohama for one or two days where some picture brides and others got on board. At that time, there were vendors selling oranges, apples, etc., who brought their goods on board. People were buying one or two baskets of mikan. I also bought a basket. I think I bought about six pears. After leaving Yokohama it was calm for one or two days, but after the third day, the seas became stormy and many people became seasick. I also became seasick and couldn't go out to eat; I lay collapsed in bed--I ate apples--not apples, but nashi. It was ringo. When you get seasick--you certainly don't feel like eating mikan--but ringo were delicious--that is, nashi. Not ringo, but nashi. Nashi are called pears, I guess. So the six that I bought in two or three days were gone--I couldn't eat anything else--so I didn't have enough--I wished I had bought more. As far as mikan are concerned, no one wanted to eat them once they became seasick on the ship. The ladies who had seasick tendencies whom I had seen getting on board in Yokohama and those I had seen in Kobe and Nagasaki, were no longer seen at the dining room. The women who got seasick lay collapsed on their beds for twelve or thirteen days and never appeared for meals.

MK: Did you stay seasick until you reached Hawai'i?

KM: The Pacific Ocean is such that there are times of calm and times of turbulence. During about half the trip we had pitching and rolling. At these times, I didn't go to eat, and barely made it to the toilet. People who get seasick are really pitiable people on board a ship. There are people who don't get seasick and say the food is

tasty on board, but such people are rare.

MK: What was the food like on board?

KM: It wasn't anything special. I would say ordinary. We would all go to a large dining room to eat.

MK: When you weren't seasick on board, what sorts of things did you do?

KM: When I wasn't seasick I would go up on deck to meet the young people being called to Hawai'i, including a Chinese youth whom I often met. He didn't understand Japanese and I didn't understand Chinese and of course neither of us understood English. So we communicated by writing Chinese characters on paper and were able to let each other know our basic thoughts. We never used words since neither of us understood the other. We didn't use English since I didn't understand it and neither did he; so we communicated our basic thoughts by writing Chinese characters.

MK: Was there anyone else coming to Kōloa on board?

KM: Among those whom I knew, there wasn't anyone coming to Kaua'i. Two of the brides who boarded with me at Nagasaki got off at Honolulu. At the inn, I had asked one of them where she was going in Honolulu and she told me where her husband would be. There was an occasion when I visited this woman upon reaching Honolulu.

MK: Where did you go upon reaching Honolulu?

KM: From the ship, we went by a small boat to the immigration office, but in those days it was called "quarantine" but now it's the immunization station. From the ship, by a small boat we went up a small pier in front of the immigration office, so we didn't go directly onto land from the ship. From the ship we went to the immigration office and stayed there for a while and then went out to the town of Honolulu.

MK: What sorts of things happened at the immigration office?

KM: At the immigration office, the husbands of the picture brides came to get them. They checked various documents so they could be released. In the immigration office a priest came and they would have a simple marriage service and then get off. There were some who got off the boat, and five or ten from a hotel would go together to a Shinto shrine and get married. Although they were recorded in Japan, they weren't in American records; so they had to get married once they left the immigration office in Honolulu.

MK: Did you have to pass any inspections at the immigration office?

KM: Yes. There probably wasn't any stool test, but my eyes had become bloodshot again; so I was detained for about ten days at the immigration office. During that time, since my father had come

after me in Honolulu from Kaua'i, every day he would drop in to see me at the immigration office. Every time he came, he brought about a half dozen oranges, and I was amazed at how delicious they were. We have mikans in Japan and we had planted navel oranges at our house, but the taste is different. True American navel oranges and Japan's mikan. . . Japan's mikans, today, are the best. But as far as oranges are concerned, American ones are far better.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: How did you feel when you first met your father in Hawai'i?

KM: I didn't have much recollection of it, but, at any rate, at that time we had exchanged pictures as well as letters so I pretty much knew what sort of person my father was. There was nothing I was surprised about. Not only me, but all boys from Japan came in Japanese clothes. I was also dressed in Japanese clothes and geta and wore what they call in Japan a toriguchi-boshi or what they call a cap here, when I left the immigration office. In those days, not just me but everyone coming from Japan. . . . Of course women--was dressed in Japanese clothing. There wasn't anyone coming in a dress. I believe it was probably afternoon by the time I left the immigration office. My father took me along. In those days a small store on Beretania and Hotel Streets sold western clothing, etc., so I bought western clothes and shoes and everything from undershirts to underpants. I never again wore those things I wore coming from Japan, and my father bought everything new for me.

MK: How did you feel at the time receiving such western clothing?

KM: I just felt the novelty of it. In the rural areas, when one thinks of western clothing, you think of the standardized uniforms of policemen, schoolteachers, soldiers, etc., and we seldom saw such things as coats and ties.

MK: What was Honolulu like in those days?

KM: I merely viewed Honolulu with curiosity. It was different from the towns in Japan, and the streets and things were different so I did feel that I had indeed come to a foreign country.

MK: How many days did you spend in Honolulu?

KM: I stayed in Honolulu for two or three days. In those days the ships traveling inter-island left only about twice a week. These ships basically came to load sugar, and there were only a few passengers. The ships named Haleakalā, Kilauea, etc., were made later, but at that time there were only those called Kina'u and Hualālai. They were ships which came to load the island's sugar, and passengers

just went along at the same time.

MK: Where did you disembark after riding on the ship?

KM: We spent overnight on the ship, and the following morning we first reached Nāwiliwili. Then we went up Kōloa Landing--there are still traces of this landing--I think it was Kīna'u. The ship went fairly far in--about a half mile in--and moored there. From there we went by a smaller boat manned by Hawaiians carrying two or three at a time to the Kōloa Landing which was a small landing.

MK: What did you think when you reached Kōloa Landing?

KM: After getting off at Kōloa Landing, there was a lot of cactus--pānini--growing there; they are a novelty in Japan. They don't exist on the Japan mainland. It's just that I saw some which people returning to Japan from Hawai'i had brought back with them. You know the needles on them? It was said that if you plant them in front of the storehouse, it keeps thieves away and they won't enter. I saw some which people who had come back from Hawai'i had planted beside their warehouse. Generally, you never see any--after getting off at Kōloa Landing these cactuses were all along the sides of the streets. So I thought there certainly were a lot of interesting things growing here. I also felt that, compared with Honolulu, the island of Kaua'i certainly was out in the sticks.

MK: After getting off from Kōloa Landing, where did you go?

KM: From there I came to the Lāwa'i house.

MK: Where was this Lāwa'i house?

KM: In those days Lāwa'i Stable. . . . On the plantation all the fields were plowed by and all the cane vehicles were pulled by mules--these are different from the usual horses--in those days they were only used for work--these animals were called mules. I never see them anymore these days. They were large bodied and strong. They would pull things and transport things--on the plantations all this was done using mules. The Lāwa'i Stables--because the plantation had a stable--the plantation camp must have had about thirty houses. Since it had a stable, it was called Lāwa'i Stables. It was later that it came to be called West Lāwa'i. The plantation camp no longer exists and we can only estimate where the sugar was planted and where the camp was; there is no longer any trace of the camp.

MK: What sort of place was Lāwa'i Stable Camp?

KM: It was a plantation camp. There were houses for the plantation laborers and a common furo which everyone used and a small store where the lady made and sold manju and simple Japanese goods. Every day about five p.m. a clerk from the large Kōloa [Plantation] Store came around to take orders. People ordered what they needed and it was delivered to them the following day.

- MK: Who was the order taker from the Kōloa store at that time?
- KM: Those people have passed away and those who were in the store at that time are no longer with us. They would come by horse and wagon and when they were coming, they would deliver the previous day's orders to the various houses. Before they went home, they would again go to each house to take orders for the next time and go back to the store.
- MK: Was there electricity and pumped water available at Lāwa'i Stable Camp at that time [ca. 1914]?
- KM: No, not at all. There was a pump at a certain place where electricity was used to pump the water, I believe. But at the usual houses, there was no such thing as electric lines. Everyone used lamps--kerosene lamps were used at the individual households.
- MK: What sort of house did you live in?
- KM: The usual plantation camp house. Even today, in Kaua'i at places like Puhī and Hanamā'ulu, there are a few left; but--even in Kōloa there are a few camp houses of old left in certain places. They are very simple things. They don't have anything like a separate parlor or bedroom and for single people there is only one room. For couples, they would have a bedroom and a living room for two. In those days, they had "long houses"; these long houses were divided into four or five parts, so in the same house, although the rooms were different, two or three people lived. Today, unless you go to the old areas, you probably won't find any plantation camps left. Probably the plantations have destroyed the old camps, and as much as possible the plantations are taking away the plantation camps. So the people who lived on the plantation are building houses on the plantation and the people who worked there have been allowed to buy and build their houses very cheaply. So now I think there are only a few people left living in the plantation camps. In the old days, the people who worked on the plantation lived for free in the plantation houses, and their firewood was delivered to them, the water--there was no water bill. Virtually all the plantation laborers lived at the plantation camp.
- MK: Was there a Lāwa'i town in those days?
- KM: Around the upper part of Lāwa'i there was a small town. Now there are traces left of the old [Kaua'i] Pineapple Company, but in that area, there were two or three shops such as a barbershop and a candy store. There were two or three shops but you could hardly call that a town--perhaps in name only.
- MK: Was there anything else besides a store or a barbershop in Lāwa'i town?
- KM: At the Lāwa'i Stable Camp there was a hair cutter--during the afternoon he did plantation work and after work was over, in the

evenings and--in those days there was work on Saturdays as well so--on Sundays, clever people who worked on the plantation ran a barber business. So at a tiny cramped place on the plantation--there was a chair which could fit one person and a spot to put the hair clippers and razor--at a plantation house, not something built by oneself, probably at the various camps, ambitious plantation workers, besides working on the plantation, ran barber services on the side. In Kōloa town--I say Kōloa town, but it was a country town--there was a barbershop with someone who ran it as a regular business.

MK: What sort of people lived in Lāwa'i? They were all laborers but, for instance, were they all Japanese or . . .

KM: In our camp at that time, there were five or six elderly Chinese. Other than them, for example, the Filipinos were at a separate place. In those days, as for plantation workers, they were mainly Japanese. So the Portuguese or Puerto Ricans were in different camps. In our Lāwa'i Stables, other than the five or six elderly Chinese, the rest were all Japanese.

MK: Did you have any contact with other races of people at the time you lived at Lāwa'i Stables?

KM: We did encounter foreigners who did the same work we did, but there was no associating with them like we have today. The Portuguese had the Portuguese Camp, the Spanish had the Spanish Camp, the Koreans and the Korean Camp, but as far as social intercourse between the races was concerned there was virtually none.

MK: What sort of work did your father do at that time?

KM: At that time, my father was a luna--he directed about five or six people who were charged with irrigating the sugarcane. I couldn't do the same work as my father and my father, on his part, also didn't want me to do this, so I went to do day work for a luna. When I started that work, I was about fifteen years and four months old, but my father, because of the trust the company had in him, even though I was a child, he received the twenty dollars regular adult pay for me. As for the cane field work, I had only seen it at that time and had never worked before in the fields in my life. But the other fellow Japanese workers were kind to me and the other friends taught me various things thinking that I didn't know anything since I was from Japan. I really didn't suffer very much. Since I received the usual pay even though I was a child, I worked as hard as I could.

MK: After you started the cane field work, what did you think?

KM: I had never seen a cane field before and I wasn't very happy about it, but, from the standpoint of earning a living, knowing that I had a lot of younger brothers and sisters and thinking that I had to help out in the home, I worked.

- MK: At that time, how many were in your family--that is, brothers and sisters?
- KM: At that time, there were seven of us, including me. Four younger brothers, two sisters, and I made seven. After I arrived, two younger brothers and one younger sister were born to make a family of ten.
- MK: That was a large family.
- KM: Yes, it was. In those days they didn't have birth control or abortion as we have today, so people from Japan believed that children were treasures and gave birth to as many as they could and brought them up.
- MK: In those days, your mother worked as a cook and took in laundry?
- KM: No, after we moved to Lāwa'i Stables, the number of children--there were probably two then--increased. When I came there were four boys and two younger sisters. When there were two or three children, she quit her job as a cook and took care of her own family's laundry and cooking and household chores.
- MK: You went to Kōloa in about 1915, didn't you? Where did you live after coming to Kōloa?
- KM: We lived in Kōloa [Japanese] Camp and all of us, my father and I also, worked on the plantation. My younger brothers were still students in public school.
- MK: Approximately where is this Kōloa [Japanese] Camp now?
- KM: Now, at the very top of Kōloa town there is the--First (Hawaiian) Bank. Behind that--now fine private homes have been built there, but the area behind that was the plantation. Next to that. . . . Next to the Japanese Camp there was a Korean Camp and a Portuguese Camp. The Spanish Camp was somewhat removed from there.
- MK: How would you compare Kōloa [Japanese] Camp to Lāwa'i Stables Camp?
- KM: Lāwa'i Stables was a small camp, but Kōloa [Japanese] Camp was the largest camp in Kōloa Plantation. So there were many Japanese, there was a store, school was close by. These are the reasons why we moved from Lāwa'i Stables to Kōloa. The main reason was the children's school. It was extremely far from Lāwa'i Stables for the children to go to school. Perhaps it was okay during good weather, but during bad weather it was pitiful. So, as a first priority, we moved to Kōloa where it was more convenient.
- MK: How large was the camp?
- KM: The size of Kōloa [Japanese] Camp was. . . . In those days the number of plantation workers was large so I believe the Japanese

laborers in Kōloa [Japanese] Camp probably numbered over a hundred.

MK: Were there other people like yourself who were young isseis or who had been sent for from Japan?

KM: At that time, there were people who had come two or three years previously and people who came one or two years after I came. In Kōloa [Japanese] Camp I think there were about ten young people who had been sent for by their parents. Among these, there was only one girl. Most of them, who were just a little older or a little younger than I, are mostly gone now, with only about two or three of us left.

MK: Does that include Nishida-san?

KM: Yes, Nishida-san [Toyo Nishida] is four years younger than I and was sent for by his parents two or three years after I was.

MK: Does that also include Fujimoto-san?

KM: Fujimoto-san [Riuichi Fujimoto] had parents living in Honolulu. He was called by his parents to come to Honolulu and studied photography there, and by the time he came to Kōloa he was twenty-two or twenty-three and had a wife. He came to Kōloa as a photographer.

MK: Did you ever get together with the other yobiyose men and do anything in those days?

KM: In those days, there was a seinenkai. It's a gathering of the young men. I once started a young men's group, but it didn't last too long. But at the Hongwanji temple, there was a Young Men's Buddhist Group. I joined that. There was also a Young Women's Buddhist Group. In those days there was a young men's group at the temples of each of the areas--these were probably made up of mainly nisei. At one time the Hawai'i Young Men's Buddhist Group was quite successful.

MK: What sort of things did you do at the young men's group?

KM: Our main purpose was the Japanese-language evening class. There were also places which started doing kendo. In any case, it was like a social gathering, and we met once or twice a month where we talked and played games.

MK: You mentioned the Japanese-language evening class. Did you also go to the Japanese-language evening class?

KM: After coming from Japan and moving to Kōloa--the Kōloa Japanese-language School was fairly large--at that time, they had a principal named Kakuta Yamamoto who had graduated from a teacher's school in Shizuoka. Four or five young men like me who had come from Japan went to this Japanese-language evening school. At that

time young men from Japan and Filipino immigrants from the Philippines came in one after the other, so, through the efforts of a person named [Rev. Catalino] Cortezan, they hired a schoolteacher and ran an English-language evening school.

MK: Who was their English-language teacher?

KM: They were all young Caucasian women from America. At that time, around 1915, there were virtually no Japanese-American teachers. I believe Miss Tashima [Mrs. Tsui Tashima Yamagata] was the very first Japanese-American teacher on Kaua'i. It was about 1915 or 1916 or 1917 [1913] when she came to Kōloa School. Until then except for two or three mixed-blood teachers, all the rest were young, female teachers from America.

MK: What sorts of things did you study at the English-language evening school?

KM: Conversation and reading and writing. Simple reading and writing and also conversation. That was about it.

MK: How did they teach it in those days?

KM: In those days--I think we might have had a test book. The people going to learn took along a tablet and pencil. The teacher brought along a reader. Sometimes, I think we did have to buy a simple reader. But mainly, we learned how to read English.

MK: About how many years did you continue going to this English evening school?

KM: This evening school was divided into about two semesters per year, each lasting about three months. There was no summer break and every year, two terms, twice, each lasting about two or three months.

MK: Where was this English-language evening school?

KM: In Kōloa, the Kōloa Japanese-language School was the center, so they held it at the Kōloa Japanese-language School.

MK: Was there a tuition fee?

KM: I can't recall exactly, but I think probably the tuition was about \$1.00 or \$1.50. At that time, the general plantation wage was twenty dollars [per month] or seventy-five cents per day. Even so, everything else was also cheap.

KM: At that time were you also working on the Kōloa Plantation?

KM: Yes, I did, and in the evenings I went to the Japanese-language school and the English-language school. These weren't held every evening, but two or three evenings a week. The evenings Japanese-

language class were held, there weren't any English classes. So for people like me, we went almost every evening, going to both English- and Japanese-language classes.

MK: What sort of plantation work did you do?

KM: In the cane fields, cutting the weeds or hanawai, these were my main work.

MK: What about your father?

KM: My father also did similar work.

MK: He wasn't a luna in those days?

KM: In those days--in Kōloa he was a new man, so he didn't work as a luna; he was a regular laborer.

MK: You mentioned that when you were eighteen or nineteen, someone came to ask you to come to work in a store.

KM: I don't recall exactly, but I was probably about seventeen or eighteen--by that time I was a young man. The store was a fairly large one--owned by (plantation). The section head of the Japanese section was a man named Morimoto. He was a Japanese. At that time, all the clerks working in the store were Japanese. There were people working in the store and those going out to Kōloa [Japanese] Camp to take orders and those going out in all directions to Lawa'i Stables or Kalāheo to take orders--so the number of Japanese working at the store was about five or six.

MK: I understand you turned down the offer to work at the store. Why is that?

KM: A person named Saito--he was a Japanese--not very old--but he was fairly successful and returned to Japan. I was asked to take his place. I believe his name was (Saito). This Japanese store worker came about twice to encourage me to join the store. At that time, you had to be a special person to be able to work at the store. But somehow, I felt that others were more suitable than I to work in business and I didn't like the idea of having to go out to take orders; so I turned it down.

MK: During that time, were your younger brothers and sisters still in school and not working?

KM: At that point, the oldest was in his sixth or seventh year. So about four or five years after going to Kōloa, my younger brother started working. My younger sister. . . . At that time, among the Japanese going to grammar school there were those who left in the sixth and seventh grade, and there weren't many going through the eighth grade. Among the girls, usually when they finished grammar school, they went out to do domestic work for Caucasian families.

There were virtually no Japanese girls going on to high school--in those days.

MK: So did your younger sister go to work in a Caucasian household?

KM: The oldest one went to do domestic work for a Caucasian family, but the younger went to learn how to do sewing. And the youngest one. . . . By that time, the older brothers and sisters were working; so she went to high school and after finishing there, she went on to business college in Honolulu. So the younger ones went to high school. Just the older two couldn't go to high school.

MK: How did you feel? Did you want to go to school?

KM: By that time, I didn't particularly feel like going to school. But I did want to study Japanese language more in evening school and study English. Studying was something which I did diligently. At that time, I didn't particularly feel I wanted to go to school. Then the Hawai'i government established a law clamping down on foreign-language schools. The foreign-language schoolteachers, especially Japanese-language schoolteachers. . . . In those days there were also Chinese- and Korean-language schools. And 99 percent of the Japanese ancestry children were going to Japanese-language schools. . . . From the point of view of the Hawai'i government, thinking the Japanese language was becoming too popular, they somehow wanted to crush it. With this thought in mind, they set down this law. So they started requiring that the foreign-language teachers know how to read and write English, know America's history, its Constitution, its ideals. Thus, the government established the law that, unless they knew these, they could not be foreign-language schoolteachers. Among the people who had come over from Japan as picture brides [some] said they weren't about to study English in order to become Japanese-language schoolteachers, and it would be better to quit. At that time, there was a sizeable number of picture brides on the island as well as in Honolulu who were Japanese-language schoolteachers. These people quit. In Kōloa, there was a teacher named Mrs. Sasaki who had come from Japan who quit, saying she couldn't start studying English at that point in order to be a Japanese-language teacher. It was after she quit that I was recommended to become a Japanese-language schoolteacher.

MK: At which school were you a teacher?

KM: At the Kōloa Japanese-language School. The principal at Kōloa Japanese-language School, Mr. Yamamoto, asked me how much Japanese I knew, whether I had seriously studied it. . . . It was due to his favor that he recommended me. After the school officials okayed this, I became a teacher at Kōloa [Japanese-language] School.

MK: In Kōloa at that time, there was the Kōloa Japanese-language School and the Hongwanji . . .

- KM: The Hongwanji Gakuin was just next door. Even today, the Hongwanji is still there and the old Kōloa Japanese-language School building still remains, but the Kōloa Japanese-language School and the Kōloa Hongwanji Gakuin existed as neighbors. Those attending Hongwanji Gakuin were children of strict believers of Hongwanji, and they didn't have very many children going there. Thus, this school naturally closed down, and their students transferred to Kōloa Japanese-language School.
- MK: In other words, the Kōloa Hongwanji Gakuin disappeared and only one [language school] remained.
- KM: I guess you can say that it became one.
- MK: At the Hongwanji Gakuin, didn't the temple priests do the teaching?
- KM: Yes. At that time, there wasn't very much income for the temple priests, so all the temples set up a school attached to it. The main income for the priests' livelihood came from this school.
- MK: Besides yourself, were there any other teachers at Kōloa Japanese-language School?
- KM: There was Kakuta Yamamoto who was the principal and his wife, and later a Nishimura-san, a young man from Japan, who came to Hawai'i after being sent for by his parents. He had come after graduating from intermediate school in Japan.
- MK: What sort of work was involved in being a schoolteacher?
- KM: The teachers for the other independent schools--from the afternoon. . . . In those days they called it morning school. The seventh- and eighth-graders went to school before the public school started. About two or three years after I started going there, because of pressure from the government who wouldn't allow foreign-language school before public school started, it was stopped.
- MK: How old were the children you taught?
- KM: By the time the children started public school, they all came to Japanese-language school.
- MK: Does that mean you taught children all the way from the first grade to the eighth?
- KM: No, all the teachers were in charge of different children. In large schools such as Kōloa [Japanese-language] School, there were four teachers for the children in grades one through eight; so the first hour, grades one to four were taught, and the second hour, grades five to eight were taught. Since our Kōloa [Japanese-language] School was fairly large, each teacher was only in charge of one group. I understand that in some small schools one teacher would be

in charge of two or three groups, but Kōloa [Japanese-language] School was a moderately large school.

MK: As a teacher, what sorts of things did you teach?

KM: In those days, I taught Japanese reading and writing. At the beginning, I also taught ethics, but I later gave that up. Things like arithmetic were taught at the public schools so I taught Japanese reading and writing, and composition--primarily these.

MK: You said that you later stopped teaching ethics. In the place of ethics, did you teach American history, etc.?

KM: At Japanese-language school, we never touched on those things.

MK: What did you like the best about teaching school?

KN: My main specialty was reading and writing. Other than that there was composition--there was also a short Japanese song [poetry] time.

MK: Did you have any difficult experiences as a schoolteacher?

KM: Not particularly, but there were children, not so much girls but boys, who didn't like school and were being forced to attend Japanese school by their parents. So for each group there were always two or three who wouldn't study. To make these people study was the hard work. Those children who did well and studied hard, they required no assistance. Because there are children who dislike studying and are slow, the teachers have to exert themselves.

MK: What did you do to children who didn't like to study?

KM: Nothing would happen if you didn't do something bad to them. So you try your hardest to make them study. If they were too mischievous, I would rap them on the head. So now, there are some fifty-, sixty-, and seventy-year-olds who tell me how they remember being knocked on the head by me. Later on laws saying teachers can't lay their hands on the students came into existence both in America and Japan, but prior to that, there was corporal punishment for the bad kids. In public schools, they even used whips. I've been to the public schools, and some of the severe women teachers hit so hard with the yardstick that it broke. So corporal punishment was used on children in both the public schools as well as the Japanese-language schools.

END OF SIDE TWO

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MK: When you were teaching, I understand Tony Kunimura was one of your students.

KM: Yes. In those days, Japan. . . . Now the nisei and sansei mainly use English names. But, before the war, although there were some with English names, most had only Japanese names. So in the case of Kaua'i's Mayor Tony Kunimura, he always writes Tony T. Kunimura. The T stands for Tsuneto. So when he used to come to Japanese-language school, he went through as Tsuneto.

MK: Was Mr. Kunimura a good student or a bad one?

KM: I wouldn't call him bad, but he was a rascal. Even today, he publicly acknowledges that he was such a troublemaker in Japanese-language school that he used to get his head knocked by Muraoka-sensei. A rascal and a person who does bad things are two different things. You have to have a fairly good head in order to cause mischief--such people grow up and become successful. If you are too quiet during your grade school years, your chances of succeeding are small. Of course, doing bad things such as hitting people or stealing things is wrong, but mischief is different from stealing things or causing harm to other people's things.

MK: I haven't mentioned this yet, but what was the tuition like in those days?

KM: When I first started, each person was charged \$1.25 [per month]. Later on it became \$1.50. Two dollars, twenty-five cents for two. Three dollars for three. If there were four, you only had to pay for three. So in those days, it was a fairly heavy burden owed to the school. At the time I started, the general [monthly] wage paid on the plantation was twenty dollars. Of course among them the cane haulers and contract workers did earn a higher wage, but the usual laborer received twenty dollars per month. To pay \$1.50 or \$2.25 for two for their children's education was not that cheap. There were a few people who could not pay the schooling costs every month. Among these, there were some admirable students who paid the tuition, which their fathers were unable to pay, after they graduated and started working.

MK: How much was your monthly pay?

KM: When I first started, it was thirty-five dollars. That was high compared with the usual pay. After that it was gradually increased little by little.

MK: At that time how many students did you have in each class?

KM: It depended on the class. There were some large ones and some not so large. But in even the small classes I had about twenty-five. In other classes I had about thirty-five--in one group.

MK: At Kōloa Japanese-language School did you celebrate special days such as the Emperor's birthday or Boys' Day?

KM: About the time I started, on the Emperor's birthday, we would raise

the Japanese flag and the American flag and hold a simple ceremony at school. This was only at the beginning, and in the end it was discontinued. Kigen-setsu and the Emperor's birthday are important national holidays in Japan, so most of the schools took the day off and held ceremonies. Even on the plantations in the old days, if the workers took time off on the Emperor's birthday, they were not criticized and allowed to do so. Since the Japanese laborers formed the majority and it was the Japanese workers who were running the plantation, the plantation treated them with a great deal of goodwill.

MK: Did you celebrate Boys' Day?

KM: There was no Boys' Day celebration at school, but in the Japanese community, on Boys' Day and Girls' Day, people would send presents and have simple celebrations in their homes and invite relatives and neighbors and friends over.

MK: What about sports meets?

KM: At school there would be sports meets every year. I also went to Japan and from Japan. . . . In those days in Japan they had exercises on the radio. Even today early in the morning KOHO radio airs its radio exercises. I don't know what year this started, but in 1931, the sixth year of Shōwa, it was also very popular in the schools in Japan. I learned radio exercise in Japan's schools, and I also bought records and came to Hawai'i. So, during the athletic meet when we taught radio exercise, I sometimes announced the radio exercises for the general public.

MK: Did you have picnics at the Japanese-language school?

KM: As a school, we didn't sponsor picnics. Kōloa Plantation, in general, on the Fourth of July--America's Independence Day--the plantation and the school had a day off and they had a small sports meet at Po'ipū. On the part of the plantation, they put out a train--there used to be a railroad at Kōloa town which traveled toward the sugar mill and right around it and then toward Kōloa Landing. The train was used to load cargo from this landing. So the plantation put out a train up to the top of Po'ipū--the train set out about 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. Everyone going to Po'ipū got on this train--I call it a train but it was actually a cane car. Everyone got on this cane car and went on a picnic to Po'ipū.

MK: With the whole family?

KM: Yes, we went with the family and a picnic lunch.

MK: What sort of sports meet was it?

KM: There was no connection with the schools. The general public, the parents together with young people, played various games. It wasn't a sports meet in the correct sense of the term. People just played

various games.

MK: Was there anything else sponsored by the plantation?

KM: Not really. Only on the Fourth of July did they put out the train and take us and, at a set time, bring us back home. I don't remember if the plantation did anything like make a donation or give out soda pop. Thing like soda pop were donated by special individuals and they mixed up cold water with juice to make drinks.

MK: You mentioned that in 1931 you studied in Japan. How did it come about that you went to Japan to study?

KM: In order for me to become a legitimate teacher. . . . I did qualify according to the Hawai'i law, but I didn't have enough qualifications to be a real teacher in Japan. In order to make up these requirements, I went to school in Japan.

MK: What was the name of the school in Japan?

KM: It was Tokyo Prefectural Aoyama Normal School which was built in Tokyo. It was one of Japan's first-class, well-known normal schools. It was the second division that I entered--for those who had graduated from intermediate school. The entrance examination to get into the first division of the Normal School was fairly difficult. I got into the school under special conditions with the permission of the Hawai'i Education Association, the consulate general, the foreign ministry, and the Tokyo prefectural office. So I received special treatment at the school.

MK: You attended Aoyama (Normal School) for one year?

KM: Yes, only for one year. In those days, the American government set a one-year limit to use its return permit on a passport. So the passport stipulated that one must go and return within a one year period. For this reason, I was in Japan for only one year. This had no connection with the Japanese government. I had Japanese citizenship and in those days I was supposed to get a military deferral--so I didn't notify the Japanese government at all. So, in a sense, you can say that what I did was sneak into Japan. If I were to have notified the government, it would have been a bother what with the military deferral and all. So in order to enter Japan and leave Japan, I used an American passport. I only communicated with the school and didn't directly bother the Japanese government.

MK: After one year, did you return again to Kōloa Japanese[-language] School?

KM: Yes, I resigned from Kōloa Japanese-language School and after I came home I reentered Kōloa Japanese-language School.

MK: So from 1932 you started teaching the radio exercises.

- KM: I taught the radio exercises in my own classes, and during the sports meet, I offered it to the general public.
- MK: Did you introduce any other things you newly learned in Japan?
- KM: Yes, some children's songs. Also, to go with them, what you might call a sort of dancing or game. I learned a few of these in Japan. From the time even before I left for Japan, there were people who came here to teach these. At that time I learned them and also when I went back to Japan. At our normal school they didn't teach them, but outside, I learned these children's songs and the accompanying Japanese dances. During the sports meets, we offered them to the general public. If I looked around, I could find some photos of this. It has been eighty years--well not quite that long but--perhaps sixty-some years since the radio exercise and music, but the way they do the exercises and the music haven't changed. At that time I don't know how many years prior to this it started but Japan has been having radio exercises for a long time.
- MK: Was there anything else you introduced?
- KM: I guess it was just mainly these radio exercises and the children's songs and fairy tales. It was only for study by the children.
- MK: So you continued working at the Kōloa Japanese-language School from 1932 to 1937-38 . . .
- KM: Yes, and, as I mentioned earlier, the problem of the principal arose and later a person named Furuya who is now working for the--not the Kobayashi but the--Nakamura Travel Agency in Honolulu. . . . He was the principal at a small school in Manā, which is located in the western part of Kaua'i. There was a movement for me to go to Manā and a teacher from Manā to come to Kōloa. It caused somewhat of an uproar. There were some who sided with me and wanted to get a new principal. I told them that I would rather quit the school than to go to a place like Manā. I remained hardheaded. Ultimately, I didn't go to Manā. So, I quit the Kōloa school and a person named Furuya came. I worked for the Kōloa Plantation for three years. In 1941, a Japanese-language school teacher in Lāwa'i moved to Honolulu, and they wanted me to replace him. So I went to be the principal at the Lāwa'i Japanese-language School.
- MK: What sort of work did you do when you started at the Kōloa Plantation?
- KM: Prior to that during summer vacation. . . . In those days before the war [World War II], all plantation work was by hand. As a result, the plantation could not keep up with the work and they were always short-handed. During summer vacations, the students, after they reached the age of about ten, all went to work on the plantation--they weeded the fields. The plantation wanted me to work as a luna [overseeing the juvenile laborers], so that's how I worked on the plantation. Since there were so many children, other

teachers also worked during the summer vacations as plantation lunas. I was fairly familiar with plantation work and had done it often. Rather than work in the fields, I went into the experimental part.

MK: What sort of experiment?

KM: We did such things as soil testing and testing the leaves of the sugarcane plant to determine how much fertilizer it had. Also what sort of fertilizer had what sort of effect. In other words its NPK. Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium are the main [components] of the fertilizer. These are what we did experiments on. After the war [World War II] started, the Lāwa'i [Japanese-language] School, as well as all the [Japanese-language] schools in Hawai'i, were closed down and all the schoolteachers lost their jobs. Among them, there were many who were interned on the Mainland, but fortunately for me, I wasn't interned. I worked in the pineapple fields for Kaua'i Pine [Kaua'i Pineapple Company]. The manager of the fields was a friend of mine from Kōloa Plantation, and he was very good to me. After about one year, just as I was becoming fairly knowledgeable about pineapple, I became a sub-luna. Later on, they told me to become a supervisor for the experimental side. The person preceding me was a Filipino and a graduate of the University of Hawai'i's College of Agriculture who could speak English and knew a lot about the experimental work. This person went back to the Philippines for a month's vacation and I was ordered to replace him. On my part, I turned it down saying that I couldn't speak English very well and was unable to do that sort of work. However, the boss severely ordered me saying, "Muraoka, you take the job!" Well, I couldn't refuse, so I did the work. However, I had done some experimenting with things like fertilizers and soil; and as far as doing calculations were concerned, I was quite good in math in Japan, so after I became a supervisor at the experimental section, I had to do all the calculating for figuring the growth of the pineapple such as when it would bud and ripen. Since I did a fairly accurate job, I received a certain amount of trust from the manager of the pineapple company.

At the time I started work, they bought a new pickup truck for me. Usually you can't use it for picking up riders from the plantation, but even though I had a family car, since the superiors or the manager or assistant manager were using the company cars, I sold my own car and always used the company car. When I went shopping, my girl, who is now on Maui, when she was in the sixth or seventh grade of grammar school, and a neighbor named Ricky, who has also become a public school teacher and lives somewhere in the 'Aiea area--when I took the two of them shopping to Kalāheo I was in a minor accident. Just at that time, a person who I knew who worked in the office happened to pass by. That person said that since it was the company car, he would report it to the manager and he immediately called him. The manager came out and since neither of the girls nor I was hurt, he just said it was all right and went home. When I reported to work the following day, I was afraid they would ask me why I was

using the company car for my private use, but nobody said anything. So I felt relieved, and after that I always used the company car as my family car.

Somehow or other until I retired at [age] sixty-five the company managed to stay in business. In the summer of that year [1965], the company closed down. So I think that my life was really a happy one.

MK: When the Lāwa'i, Kaua'i Pineapple Company closed down, what happened to Lāwa'i?

KM: There were some who had retired previously, but I believe I was the only one who retired that year. Among the others, there were those who had not yet reached sixty-five who were in their sixties, those in their fifties, temporarily were out of work and were at a loss. However, year by year, they found new jobs and those over sixty took early retirement.

MK: What happened in Lāwa'i town and Lāwa'i plantation camp?

KM: The Kaua'i Pineapple Company's camp was in Kalāheo. In Lāwa'i there was the company's land and house, but these were all sold. So the Kaua'i Pineapple camp, although there is some land left, has all been liquidated. And such things as the pineapple cannery's warehouse has been leased by various companies such as repair shops or store warehouses which are using the old company building.

MK: You moved to Lāwa'i in 1941 intending to become the principal of Lāwa'i Japanese-language School, didn't you?

KM: I was called over as the principal. However, on December 7th of that year, the war between the U.S. and Japan started--that was on a Monday [Sunday]. There were some Japanese-language school students who left their books at the school--they were supposed to take their books home with them but they left them on their desks. They came back to pick up their books and said to me, "Muraoka-sensei, school is over." That was the end.

MK: You weren't interned during the war. Why is that? Most of the teachers were interned.

KM: An agent of the Honolulu Japanese general consulate. . . . Before the Japanese war, if a Japanese child were born, it would be reported to the Japanese government, and if someone with Japanese citizenship died, his death had to be reported. In order to go through these formalities, there were agents as representatives of the consulate. In Kōloa, these people were composed of both of the Buddhist priests and a person named Nogami--he no longer worked and received money for doing this work of carrying out these formalities. Since in Kōloa there were already three such agents of the consulate, I didn't become a consulate agent. And when I reported a child's birth or draft deferral or person's death to the

consulate, they would accept them all for me. A friend of mine who worked for the Nippu Jiji said he wanted to recommend me to be a consulate agent, but I told him that wasn't necessary. Everything that I sought to formalize at the consulate was done for me so I told him there was no need for this, so I didn't become an agent. Thus, even before the war started, in America there was a blacklist of people who were connected with the consulate, and people who gave special assistance to the Japanese in the camps and the towns. So the people whose names were on the blacklist were checked out even before the war started. As soon as the war started, they were rounded up by the police.

The evening of the start of the war, the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. . . . The FBI in Kōloa--after that he became the mayor of Kaua'i, but--at that time there was a police substation in Kōloa and he was an officer there--his name was [Antone "Kona"] Vidinha--his wife is still living. He was a friend of mine since our younger years in Kōloa, and that evening he came over--I think it was after nine [p.m.]. Before that we had had blackouts when we had to put black pineapple paper on the windows--but at that time--I almost didn't know when the war started. So at a time when I had put a light on and gone to the bathhouse, a man named Maxey said to me, "Muraoka, why you no shut the light off?" I asked him why and he said "This is wartime." With that, he went away. I didn't know what was going on. Before the blackout, they were notified ahead of time. By evening time black paper had already been pasted to all the windows everywhere. They had already carried out a blackout. Since I was unaware of these things, I turned the light on and was washing myself at the bath when he came and said that to me. I turned the light off and went into the house. When I turned the radio on--in those days it was KTOH and at nine o'clock there was usually a Japanese-language broadcast. So I thought if I listened to the news on KTOH, I would find out what had happened. But there was nothing on the radio. By that time everything was completely blacked out. It wasn't radio trouble, but I thought it was; and I figured under such circumstances I'd just better go to sleep early. So my wife and children and I went to sleep. In a short time, there was knocking on the door, so I turned the light on. When I opened the door, someone said, "Shut the light off." The other person shined a flashlight in my face. I couldn't see who the other person was, but from his voice I knew immediately that it was Kōloa's Officer Vidinha. The person said "Muraoka, how come you stay here?"

I said, "I come to take the former principal's place. I came over here."

He said, "Oh is that so."

The person [who was the principal] before me was named Tashiro, so he asked me where Tashiro went. I told him he moved to Honolulu. He asked me when he was coming back and I told him he had moved away permanently. He said something like, "How come you stay here." The FBI--there were about two of them--they talked between themselves in

the back. There was someone named Kawashima at the grand shrine. They asked me if Kawashima were around and I told them that I didn't know about him. Vidinha said, "I wonder he went Honolulu."

I said, "I don't know nothing about him."

He said okay and left and as I watched from the rear window, I saw that they parked their car under the grand shrine and go up with their flashlights. That night they took this Kawashima away. So everyone. . . I knew Vidinha--I had been acquainted with him since our days in Kōloa. He didn't even know that I had moved to Lāwa'i. But that night, if they had looked through my house, since this person named Tashiro had asked me to take care of the military deferrals of some of Lāwa'i's young people, there was a letter for this purpose on the table with even a stamp on it addressed to the consulate which I had planned to send on Monday. If they had searched my house that night, without further ado I would have been seized that night. But that night, they didn't even enter my house and just talked to me at the door and went away. So that night and the following day, everyone on the blacklist was taken away.

- MK: What was Lāwa'i like during the war? There were soldiers in the Kōloa area, but what about in Lāwa'i?
- KM: My house where I lived was below the school and the school was in the upper area. But nothing happened to my house--no one bothered us.
- MK: What sort of things did the soldiers do in Lāwa'i?
- KM: They only stayed in Lāwa'i and didn't do anything in particular. So the Kalāheo public school was turned into a hospital, but nothing happened in Lāwa'i. I understand there was some training done in the Māna area, but in Lāwa'i, they only stayed overnight and didn't do anything.
- MK: With the soldiers staying in Lāwa'i, did the town on Lāwa'i become more lively?
- KM: No, not at all. During the day, there weren't any soldiers around. They only came at night to sleep. So the war really didn't have any effect on Lāwa'i.
- MK: When you first came to Hawai'i, you went to Lāwa'i Stables Camp, didn't you. At that time, there was the small town of Lāwa'i.
- KM: In the upper direction. But that was about three miles away. So it was far for the children to go to school, you see. For this reason, we moved to Kōloa. Where the Lāwa'i cannery was, there were two or three stores and a barbershop and a manjū shop. You couldn't call it a town, but there were some shops such as one run by Chinese.
- MK: Did this Lāwa'i town exist in 1941?

KM: Yes, it did in 1941.

MK: Are the same people still running the shops?

KM: Yes. The Chinese shop was bought out by Japanese and there was a barber shop and a manjū shop which subsequently changed hands. During the war I believe it was up there. There was a grand shrine. In those days there was the cannery, so--you might not be able to call it a town, but--there weren't any coffee shops but there was a place selling cold drinks and manjū.

MK: Was the manjū place called Akaji manjū?

KM: Yes, the Akaji manjū people. In those days, they had a business in the area above the cannery. Now, they have bought and built their own house and are running their business.

MK: Where was this Lāwa'i Japanese-language School?

KM: Just a short distance away from the cannery. The school grounds belonged to the pineapple company. The Japanese laborers discussed it with the company and obtained the land and built the school themselves. Not just Lāwa'i, but the Kōloa [Japanese-language] School land also belonged to the Kōloa Plantation. Almost all the Japanese-language schools leased the plantation land and built the schools.

MK: Was there a Lāwa'i town even after the war?

KM: As long as there was a pineapple mill, it existed, but after the pineapple company closed down and there was no more business, the barbershop lady retired and the storekeepers quit. Before the manjū shop closed down, I think they probably moved. By the time the war started, it had moved to its present location.

MK: Kōloa and Lāwa'i are fairly close to each other--by car. Was there any relationship between the people of Kōloa and Lāwa'i?

KM: Not really. There are members of the Kōloa Hongwanji and Jōdōshu living in Lāwa'i, so, even now, for church matters, they go back and forth; but other than that, the Lāwa'i people go to Kōloa for shopping or for bank business. Lāwa'i has its own Lāwa'i Japanese Association, so there is no deep interrelationship--just individual relationships.

MK: During the war and after the war, there was the idea of "Don't speak Japanese; speak only English."

KM: No, there was only a movement for this. There was a movement on the part of the American government to "don't speak Japanese." So as much as possible. . . . It couldn't be helped between Japanese people but--they tried not to speak about Japan or use Japanese in general.

MK: What sort of influence did this movement have--on Kōloa and Lāwa'i?

KM: There really wasn't an effect on Kōloa and Lāwa'i.

MK: What sort of influence did it have on the children?

KM: The children in this area of Lāwa'i used to go to the Kōloa school--from before the war. Even now there are some going to the Kōloa school. However, most of them go to the Kalāheo school.

MK: Japanese school?

KM: No, the English school [i.e., public school]. Before they had a Japanese-language school in Lāwa'i, so the children of Lāwa'i went there, and the Kōloa children went to Kōloa, and the Kalāheo ones went to Kalāheo.

MK: So the Kōloa Japanese-language School closed down at the start of the war and what happened after the war?

KM: The principal at that time was interned and the Kōloa [Japanese-language] School was vacated. Since the land belonged to Kōloa Plantation, the plantation also took the building. In a short while, it was used as a place for senior citizens' meetings and the Filipinos used it a little for their meetings. Since I had already moved to Lāwa'i, I don't know too much about those things. Since the next door is the temple, I have gone back and forth to this temple; but I don't have any business with the school building, so . . .

MK: I'd like to ask you a little about your family. When did you get married?

KM: I believe it was 1937. Yes, it was 1937.

MK: What was your wife's name?

KM: It is Kimiyo--Fujikawa.

MK: Was she from Kaua'i?

KM: She was born in Honolulu and before she went to school, because her father went to work for the McBryde Sugar Company's store, they moved to 'Ele'ele. So her English-language school was the 'Ele'ele public school. Her Japanese-language school was probably. . . . In those days there was an 'Ele'ele Hongwanji Gakuin so I think she went to the 'Ele'ele Hongwanji Gakuin. After her public schooling was finished, she went to Japan and graduated from a girls' school in Japan.

MK: Was she also a schoolteacher for a while?

KM: Immediately after she returned from Japan, she went to 'Ele'ele.

There was a non-sectarian school in Wahiawa--'Ele'ele had its own Hongwanji Gakuin--Hanapepe had its Japanese-language school. These three schools united and, using the 'Ele'ele public school rooms, formed the--I can't remember the exact name, whether it was 'Ele'ele or Hanapepe--United Japanese-language School. She was a teacher there for a while.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: When you met your wife, was she still teaching school?

KM: At that time, my wife's mother passed away. Since her younger brothers and sisters were still small, she quit [teaching] school and stayed at home.

MK: Did someone make arrangements for you to meet her?

KM: A go-between was. . . . Later on we asked the Kōloa priest and the 'Ele'ele priest to be a matchmaker because we already knew one another.

MK: After you got married--how many children do you have now?

KM: The following year, our oldest daughter, Grace Mieko, was born--that was in August. The following year after that, in December, our second daughter, Eileen Fumiko, who now lives in Honolulu, was born. In 1941, our third daughter, Betty Kiyoko, was born. There are three girls.

MK: With the two of you being schoolteachers, how was your children's schooling?

KM: The three of them attended Kalāheo public schools. After they finished there, they went to Kaua'i High School. The oldest finished Kaua'i High and entered the University of Hawai'i saying she wanted to be an engineer, since she was a fairly good student. But I told her that engineering was not a career for a woman but she would have to someday marry and become a mother. The engineering field would change every year and, in any case, engineering work is not for women; so I urged her to go into the education field. She consented and went on to the University of Hawai'i. The second girl--she was born one year later--the first was born in August 1938 and the next was born at the end of '39. When my second daughter started going to the University of Hawai'i, I had no complaints with her. She wanted to be a schoolteacher. When the last girl (1941) started going [to the University of Hawai'i], I also didn't have any problems with her. So all of them went into education at the UH. The oldest one, went on to get her fifth year [certificate]. At that time I was working at the [pineapple] company for a low wage,

but, fortunately, the Lāwa'i cannery still offered summer jobs; so the girls worked in the cannery during the summers and earned a fair amount of their tuition and spending money. We were very fortunate.

MK: After having lived these long years in Kōloa and Lāwa'i, how do you feel about your life?

KM: I was very fortunate in having the three girls attend the University. The oldest received a state scholarship, because she was good in her studies. Although I did experience poverty and sadness in my life, in general I feel I have had a happy life. To such an extent that, even today, every morning and every night I thank God. Wherever I go, everyone is kind to me. At my work place, my superiors had faith in me and treated me well. And my three girls--later they rented an apartment--in those days an apartment cost between \$125 and \$150, I believe. The school tuition and books were separate, but for the [rent] and the three of them to eat, I sent \$150 per month. But I had no need to give them any spending money. The girls also gave me most of the money they earned during the summer, having saved it for their spending money. Nonetheless, I think the girls did suffer hardships during the five years or so they went to school. I really feel sorry for them. Presently, I have three grandchildren attending UH [University of Hawai'i], but every month I send them \$50 spending money. Sometimes when I go, for instance, to the dorm with my daughter, she says to me "Papa, you see the change, our time and now--you see the change?" So when the number two girl entered the dormitory--it was called Frear Hall--that was the one for the girls. I don't know where the boys' is. I have been to Frear Hall. In those days, from the steps they told me, "Papa you no can go up." These days the boys and girls are all together in the dorms, although I understand they are on separate floors. When I go to visit, the young people go out together and come home together--there really is a change--a great change. But when our girls went, it wasn't like that yet. Since they were only one year apart. . . . I told them that since we are making sacrifices to send you to college, "I like you graduate under my--Muraoka's name. Yeah. After graduate, I don't care you marry the day or the next day--that I don't care, but I like you graduate under my, Muraoka's name." So there may have been minor things, but there was nothing major which caused us any trouble or worries; and, fortunately, all three graduated from the University.

MK: This is my last question, but what do you think about plantation life and the life of the immigrant?

KM: Well, the first-generation immigrants suffered a great deal. Within that suffering, the education of their own children was given top priority and they were sent to school. So, although the parents suffered, the children going to the University also suffered hardships. These nisei overcame these hardship and each in his own way succeeded. Senator Daniel Inouye, Spark Matsunaga, and the former Governor George Ariyoshi--they are all niseis. Their parents are all people who came as immigrants. So, I don't think any of

them went through school easily. Although their parents suffered, the people themselves also suffered hardships and they overcame these hardships to become the fine people they are. Not only these people, but there have been many other outstanding Japanese and Japanese ancestry people produced. In order to reach such a point, both the parents and the children had to suffer hardships. The buds of this suffering have just become full bloom.

MK: With this we will close for today. Thank you for allowing us to take up so much of your time to talk with us.

KM: Don't mention it. It was really nothing.

END OF INTERVIEW

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