

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Harold M. Aoki, 76, storeowner

"They used to trade with us, Prince and Princess Kūhiō. Because they were only one block away. We can see the house over there. And they used to call my dad. The fish over there, plenty mullet over there. And he used to bring his net, and from the pier, he used to go out and throw, eh?"

Harold Minoru Aoki, Japanese, eldest of nine children, was born in 1910, in Waikīkī, O'ahu. His parents, Niro and Mizuno Aoki, were immigrants from Hiroshima-ken, Japan. Niro Aoki worked on a Big Island plantation, served as a luna's houseboy, waited on tables at the Moana Hotel, and peddled vegetables on a horse-drawn wagon, prior to his founding N. Aoki Store. Mizuno Aoki took in laundry, raised small livestock, and worked in the store while tending to the needs of a growing family.

Harold Aoki spent his boyhood in and around the family store on the Diamond Head end of Kalākaua Avenue. He attended Waikīkī Elementary, Punahou, and Phillips Commercial School.

Now semi-retired, Aoki and other family members still operate the store, re-named Aoki Mini Mart, located on Kalākaua Avenue near Fort DeRussy.

Tape No. 13-25-1-85 and 13-26-1-85

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Harold Aoki (HA)

March 19, 1985

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Harold Aoki on March 19, 1985, at his office in Waikīkī, Honolulu, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

You know, for the first question today, Mr. Aoki, if you could tell me what was your mother's maiden name.

HA: My mother's name was Mizuno Motonishi.

MK: Okay. And what do you know about your mother's family's background?

HA: Well, the father was here, so actually, our relatives, over a hundred years [in Hawai'i]. You know, he was in Maui, Hawai'i, and Honolulu. And he used to buy and sell horses. And then, he used to tell my sister--and I was there, too--and he said he used to drive the royal family [of the Islands] from one place to the church over there. You know that St. Augustine Church [in Waikīkī]? The old church, he used to drive. Those days was just horse and buggy, eh? No cars, you know. So, he was saying that, but he stayed there [in Hawai'i] so long that the grandma got mad. You know, he sent no letter, nothing. So, they took him as being dead and gone. He stayed here awhile, about sixteen years or longer. And those days, it [mail communication] takes about twenty-eight to thirty days to Japan anyway. He used to tell my sister those things like that. When he went back Japan, everybody was surprised because they took him as dead and gone. See, so that's my grandpa's background, you see.

(Typing in background. Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

HA: How they found my mother, I don't know. But she came to Hawai'i as a picture bride. I don't know what year, though, see. When she was about nineteen [years old], anyway. So, you have to subtract, no? She died at ninety-three, so from that, nineteen, that's when she comes. But my dad, he say, it took him twenty-eight days from Kobe, I think. Kobe to Hilo, direct. Kobe to Hilo. Then, stayed over there for, I don't know, years. I don't know, so many years,

he worked in a sugar plantation on a contract basis. Few years, I think, and then he worked for the luna as a houseboy to clean the house, wash dishes, and maybe, probably, help cooking, too, I think. Yeah. I forgot the name of the luna. It's long. . . . But anyway, after that, he was at Hilo, Pāpa'ikōu. I don't know--you not from Hawai'i [Big Island]?

MK: No, but where was he?

HA: Pāpa'ikou. You know, there's a place, Pāpa'ikou. He was there for a few years again. And those days, when young men all, young men get together. He heard about Honolulu--see, Honolulu--and he was telling me. And then, he said, "Oh, there's more future in Honolulu." So, he came to Honolulu and, of course, by boat. There's no plane or anything those days, you know. Oh, took them, I don't know, one day and a half or one night. That's something I don't know, see. And then, he worked in the Moana Hotel for so many years, I think. I don't know how long, but so many years. And then, as a waiter; and then, as a cook. In the meantime, he got married, you see, this picture bride [HA's mother].

MK: And what was his name?

HA: My dad's name? Niro Aoki. Niro Aoki, he's from quite a distance from my mother's place. Hiroshima, you see. Hiroshima, just like you say Honolulu. Honolulu is where? Kaimukī, Kapahulu, Mānoa, Kalihi, 'Ewa, like that. My mother was Hiroshima Itsukaichi, which is a big town now, today. And then, my dad was about--by car, it's only about eight, nine minutes [away from HA's mother's hometown]. Eight, nine minutes by car to his home. If you walk, takes you about half a day anyway, you know, through the rice patch. I've been there, oh, many times, no? So, that's where he was born. He came to Honolulu at the time, waiter. And then, a cook helper. And then, in the meantime, got married. And then, he said, "Well, working for somebody, you'll never go ahead." So, naturally, he started out, vegetable peddler. Vegetable peddler, but he sold not only vegetables, I think. I don't know. I can't remember because I was only--I showed in the picture [of Aoki family in front of HA's father's peddling vehicle], I was at two years, and my sister. You see, little boy like two or even three, I can't remember.

MK: What did he sell?

HA: Vegetables, and some other things like that, with a horse and buggy. So, he goes around Waikīkī. You know, those days, by horse and buggy, cannot go to Mānoa or Kaimukī. That's a long distance in those days. Just around Waikīkī, a few houses, you know. Of course, they had more than 100 houses around. That's when he met Mr. Steiner [father of interviewee, Ernest Steiner], and that's a good friend; and Mr. Weil. He's a Jewish man, I think. W-E-I-L, I think. Weil. And he had, I think, sons and daughters that I don't know. He [HA's father] made a lot of friends, you know, with these Haole people. That's why, when he opened his store, they know him

when he used to ride horse and buggy, go around from house to house, sell vegetables. Maybe he had bread, or cookie, or crackers, or whatnot, I don't know. You see, he goes from house [to house]. . . . So, when he opened his store, lot of those Haoles they know him. So when he started the business, they started to buy from him. And when he started the store, that was around before the war.

MK: Before the First World War?

HA: Yeah, before the first one.

MK: Before we get into the opening of that first Aoki Store, I was wondering, while your father was peddling the vegetables in Waikīkī, what was your mother doing?

HA: Because my dad didn't have no money, she have to do laundry work. Laundry work is the hard uniform, which the [hotel] waiters wear. That one for five cents. She always tell me, "Only five cents, those days." Ho, that's hard job for five cents. She had about a dozen or so [uniforms to launder], I guess.

That was not enough, so she started raising chickens, ducks. You know, chicken, ducks. And then, probably, she sold--you know, she [had] plenty of 'em. She had not only one or two; she had about thirty, forty of 'em. So, naturally, you have to sell, eh? So, she said, gee, every night, she used to sleep two hours. You know, two hours, sometimes three hours, sometimes one hour. The mongoose used to come around--they used to have bushes around, no?--they come around, take the chicken or the duck. They make lot of noise, so you have to get up, you see. So, sometimes, one hour, she have to get up, look around with lantern. Those days, no more flashlight. Lantern, you know. That was quite sometime ago, of course. Lantern, go around, see those. . . . She said she seen big nezumis. It's not a nezumi, it's a mongoose. Big one like this [one-and-a-half feet long]. That's mongoose, you know. And chase 'em away, then go to sleep, get up 4:00 in the morning, 3:30, 4:00.

That was going on for few years, I think, until they got little bit money. I think before they went to [i.e., opened] the store, they saved a few dollars. My dad bought the place for, I don't know, \$400 or \$800. Took him quite some time to pay that amount, you know, for the store, quite some time. But when the World War I came in, that's when they paid the bill. They made money, you see.

MK: You know, the place where your mother did the ironing and the raising of the chickens, where was that house?

HA: Oh, across the street of the Moana Hotel. There was a camp there which lot of these bachelors and picture bride people used to stay. He said there wasn't too much. That old Royal Theater. And I told you about the banyan tree? There was a camp in there [near the banyan tree] for ten or maybe twelve [families]. I only remember two or three persons that stayed around there during those days.

That was Hikida--Mr. Hikida [father of interviewee, Sadao Hikida]--Tanaka, and Fukuda. Fukuda's son was working until a few years ago. He must be around my age, seventy-five or seventy-six, see. Of course, the father and the mother died. He [i.e., senior Fukuda] was the engineer for the hotel. So, they [HA's family] were in the camp for, I don't know, quite some time, though, until they bought that [store]. Of course, before that, the horse and buggy, went around to sell things. Then they got a few bucks, then they. . . . Of course, I was born across the street from Moana Hotel, I told you little while ago, no? Across the street, that's where my sister and I was born.

MK: You were born in one of the cottages . . .

HA: Cottage, yeah.

MK: . . . by the banyan tree area where there used to be the Royal Theater?

HA: Yeah, that's right.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: So, you were born in the cottages you just mentioned. And you were telling me about that time yourself and your . . .

HA: My sister Mildred and I, we was born there. You know, when they give birth, what do you call that? A midwife? Midwife, they call, eh? Mrs. Hikida [mother of interviewee, Sadao Hikida] was the midwife. You know, she used to do all that around that camp, around there, because no doctors, see, those days. They call that midwife, yeah, I think. In Japanese, samba-san. So, she [Mrs. Hikida] was, I think, [midwife for] about all the brothers and sisters, she used to come. We moved to the store down the place, we had nine children. You know, my mother. I think mostly all--I don't remember too good--but mostly all, oh, my dad used to call Hikida. She comes down. O-samba-san, ne? They call that, no? They were born like that, all of them. Oh, today, they don't have that kind, go to hospital, but in those days. . . . They had Queen's Medical, I think, those days, but, all, Mrs. Hikida. Of course, she died at the age of ninety-something. If she was living, she would be a hundred and something.

MK: You know, those cottages that you were born in, what did they look like?

HA: Oh, it's something like, one house, one door this way. Under the house, you can stand up, you know, in the olden days, mostly, because you can put the junks under the house. This stairs, I still remember that I used to go fall down, too. And this side, another people stayed. And the rooms, kitchen, and then you have bedroom and living room all in one. But in those days, no bed, you know. Sleep on the floor. I still remember that, sleep on the

floor. But when we moved from there to the other place, that's when the first bed came out to us. Of course, they had, but my parents couldn't afford, those days.

MK: And then, how about when you folks wanted to take a bath? What did you folks do in that Moana area?

HA: Oh, they had a furo. I still remember that when you ask me those things. They used to have furo as a community furo. Made of wood, you know. And we used to put kiawe wood under [to heat it]. You know, make kiawe wood [fire]. Oh, just enough for one person, that thing. Well, the furo is only one person can get in. But room over there, so you can go in there, eh? And we used to wear geta. Yeah, geta. You cannot go in the furoba with slipper--all wet, eh? Geta. And every night, people come in. If they go in the furo water, then there's cover, eh, furo. And then, when get little nurui, go outside, put kiawe wood inside. The smoke used to come out, plenty smoke. Those days, smoke on the floor, don't make difference.

MK: And then, who would take care of that community furo?

HA: Everybody. The last person--you know, they have a plug--take 'em [water] out, and then clean 'em up. In those days, oh, yeah, everybody help each other. But today, it's different, you see. And the furo, like the plug, take 'em out. Next day, the person who's going to want to take a bath early, then they put water inside. But at that time, they had this city water, you know. All in there, city water. Because the place we stayed, in the front had a river. You see, river.

But the toilet was old-style. No flush toilet. Go in the back, around the back, we used to go. And scary, you know, nighttime dark, and the bushes around. Oh, yeah. But, oh, yeah, before that, I remember, you know the water? Like this. (HA makes pumping motion.)

MK: Hand pump?

HA: Yeah. Then the city water came in.

MK: What kinds of people lived in the cottages over there?

HA: Oh, all hotel workers. All Japanese only, no other nationality.

MK: So, in those days, what kinds of people worked at Moana Hotel?

HA: All Japanese. All from Japan. None of them born here. Issei.

MK: What did your father tell you about the times he was working at Moana Hotel?

HA: Well, he says, tourists comes around, that's Haole people. But takes them from San Francisco or Los Angeles--you don't know where

the boat come from, anyway, somewhere--he said takes about twelve or fifteen days [to travel to Hawai'i], those days. And that's only, oh, half a dozen people, that's all. In those days, only rich people used to travel. They can afford to stay ten, fifteen days on a boat, eh? Cost money. They come in, they stop over. And then, I don't know how they went to the pier. I don't know how, you see, I don't remember that far. But he used to wait as a waiter. Only half dozen or so. Sometime, little more, they said. But they stay quite some time before the next boat come in two, three weeks later, maybe. The center of the Moana [Hotel], I told you, [is old]; on the side [i.e., the wings], that's new. Of course, it's old, but not. . . . The center is the oldest one. They said over 125 years old or something [eighty-four years old] like that.

MK: You know, your father, how much money was he making as a waiter at Moana [Hotel]?

HA: As a waiter? About ten dollars a month. Ten to fifteen dollars a month, which was big, he said, in those days. So, actually, fifty cents a day. Yeah?

MK: And then; now days, waiters get tips, huh? How about those days?

HA: In those days, gee, I don't know. Probably he had, but I wasn't interested in that, so. . . . Probably they had at the time, I guess, huh? Those days, they give five cents tip, I think. That's big money, they used to give. No more ten cents or twenty-five cents. Twenty-five cents, that never happen, those days, yeah? So, I didn't ask him about the tips, no.

MK: Let's see, I know that your family was living over there, and then eventually, they had the vegetable peddling business.

HA: Yeah, yeah.

MK: Was your father doing the peddling business at the same time he was working at Moana Hotel?

HA: No, only strictly a vegetable peddler. But my mother, she used to take care of the chickens, ducks, and things like that, and wash clothes. Plus, help him tie up the daikon, and lettuce, and then radishes like that. They used to tie up the vegetables and help my dad so that he can go out, eh? He used to have wet cloth on top the wagon. See, even the wind blow--well, the horse don't go too fast, anyway. (Chuckles) And they go from one place to another. Just maybe one house two blocks away, another house three blocks away, another house four blocks away. He used to go as far as little further than that Kapi'olani Park, I think, around there. From Moana [Hotel to] Kapi'olani Park, you can walk. Only half an hour, eh? In those days, well, one house to one house, one house, there, so. And people living at Paoakalani [Avenue], and Lemon Road, and Kūhiō Avenue, but there are only about one or two houses,

I think, around there. But when we came in, there were quite a lot of houses, anyway.

- MK: Now that you mentioned the time you folks came into the Paoakalani area, that was when? About when? Before the First World War, you were saying?
- HA: Just before. I think was around 1912? I had a picture of that. Oh, I took it away already. Nineteen twelve, that's when. . . . And then, 1914, I think, the world war. . . . Yeah? That's when he made the money, and it was easy for him to pay that either \$400 or \$800 that he had to pay for the store. And not much merchandise. Only half a dozen merchandise, I think. Couldn't afford to, you know.
- MK: And whose land was that store on?
- HA: I don't know how, but it was still Lili'uokalani Trust. Lili'uokalani Trust at that time over there. The whole place was Lili'uokalani Trust. The previous people had a lease. So, naturally, you rent the store, that's all. They stayed there quite some time, though, I think.
- MK: And who were the previous people?
- HA: Gee, that, I don't know. That I don't know. I was around two or three years old at the time. (Chuckles)
- MK: I want to have you try to describe the store--inside and outside the store. What did it look like?
- HA: Oh, I showed you the pictures, huh?
- MK: Uh huh. Try tell me what it looked like.
- HA: Well, it's just like, you know, Waipahu, 'Ewa? The old stores, just wood stores, and they have this cigarette [sign]? And our sign was on top? I showed you the picture. I should have brought it here. I forgot again. But "N. Aoki," eh? "Tobacco and Groceries." Had on top, "Tobacco and Groceries." That's a sign on top of that marquee. And outside is just a straight wall and a window. And of course, we had this gasoline tank. Gasoline tank right over there. I know even when they started to dig over there, I was wondering what they going to do. I didn't know my father was going to sell gasoline and oil.

And in the store, it's grocery store, eh? We had, oh, pineapple, pork and beans, coffee. The ceiling was about, oh, twelve feet high. So, we used to get ladder, and we used to get a pincher. Just to get one stuff, [we used the] pincher. To get the stuff out, the pincher, eh? We sell broom, mop head, mop handle, and, let's see. The barrel, that time there's no liquor anyway. I don't know what came in the barrel. We had barrel, you know.

Barrel for something--oh, bottled stuff. Some kind of bottle, in a barrel used to come in, you know. So, let's see.

The oil, we used to carry kerosene oil. We used to carry automobile oil. And alongside the store, we had room, so we put the oil. If that store ever burned that time, boy, it goes up like that. Yeah. We had oil in that same store, too, which they don't allow today. We cannot put oil and gas, you know, right alongside this building, eh? Like that, the store this way, and then, oil, kerosene. Next, one thin wall, and inside there, we used to have. And right back of that we had stacked up groceries--pork and beans, pineapples, and canned peaches, sardine, and things like that. You know, corned beef, like that.

MK: How about any Japanese or Hawaiian goods?

HA: No. Those days, no more. No Japanese goods. All, we were selling only American goods. Haole can goods, no?

MK: I was wondering, why did your father decide to start a store?

HA: Because he figured that to raise the family of four at the time--me, and my sister, and her [HA's mother]--you work for fifteen dollars a month or maybe less, you cannot survive. And then, my mother have to work so hard. [HA's mother slept only] two hours a night, three hours a night. That's a big job. And when you wash clothes like that, five cents. You sell maybe about ten cents a dozen or fifteen cents a dozen eggs, eh? And the chicken, I don't know how much. Was cheap, anyway. Ducks, like that. You have to buy the feed. Chicken and duck feed like that. You cannot last too long, because only few hours of sleep a night. So they decided to do their own business. They said the seller of the store approached my dad because he goes around and sell vegetables. Since he has a vegetable wagon, he got friendly with all those people.

And at first, my dad was saying that, no money. "O-kane nai." And at the time, my mother wears Japanese clothes, this yukata just like. In those days, 1912, 1915, 1920, no more muumuu, or no more Haole clothes. She used to wear Japanese clothes day in, day out. So, they [previous storeowner] said, well, you don't have to pay all. You pay only \$100 down to pay the thing [i.e., buy the store]. In two years he paid 'em all because on account of the war [World War I], the sugar--sugar the main thing, and then, flour. In those days, you make your own bread. You make your own all kind with flour, eh? You buy 'em while few dollars today, and tomorrow, it's up another few dollars. And the following day, it's another few dollars. Every day, it's going up like this. And he couldn't buy too much at the time, so he only bought--the most he bought was two bags. Two bags, he made ten dollars, which is big money, he said, in those days. Ten dollars. Or otherwise, ordinary, they only make one dollar. On account of the war, the price goes up every day. So, that's how he was able to pay the store [i.e., purchase the store]. Then the war, daily, he's making money every day. Of

course, not big money, because small store, only.

And then, I showed you the picture--I was sitting down in the front. I think I was three [years old] at the time. And then, "Rusty" Holt's [i.e., interviewee, Lemon "Rusty" Holt's] sister was in the picture, too. I don't know which one, though. They had three sisters, I think. So, I don't know which one there. If you brought the picture down, maybe he [Lemon "Rusty" Holt] might recognize which sister it is, yeah?

MK: Mm hmm. And in those days, who were your father's customers?

HA: All the people behind [the Aoki Store]. Well, sometime later, Asuka--the camp, they used to have. Sasaki, and then these Ewalikos, and then this Freitas. Freitas came in way back. But when we first went there, not much. Only "Rusty" Holt's family was right next door. Then, the following corner was Cunha. C-U-N-H-A. Cunha. They used to have big yard and one house. Big yard. That's the corner of, I don't know. "Rusty" Holt was kind of big house, and next, you see. Oh, that's Kapahulu [Avenue], I think.

MK: Lemon [Road] and Kapahulu [Avenue], then?

HA: No, on Kalākaua [Avenue].

MK: Kalākaua and Kapahulu [Avenues] . . .

HA: Kapahulu [Avenue], yeah. I used to go. They had stone wall, those days. Because they're rich people, eh? In those days, we called them rich people. Made of concrete, you know, concrete stone wall. "Rusty" Holt's was, they had this stone with--you know, like a rough stone?--with cement right around in the front. Oh, they had lots of coconut trees. And that's when "Rusty" Holt's aunty was right next door. I used to go right next door, so I go over there and get coconuts like that. And they used to come to our store and buy when we were small kids. So, naturally, six-, seven-, eight-years-old kids, we're all rough, you know. We don't know what's what, anyway.

(Laughter)

MK: So, your father's customers came from the neighborhood area?

HA: Neighborhood, yeah.

MK: Earlier, you mentioned when he was peddling, he had a lot of rich Haole customers. Who were those customers by name?

HA: Gee, the only one I know was Weil, or this Hawaiian people, Kanakanui, and this Prince Kūhiō [i.e., Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole]. They used to trade with us, Prince and Princess Kūhiō [i.e., Elizabeth Kahanu Kaauwai Kalaniana'ole]. Because they were only one block away. We can see the house over there. And they used to call my

dad. The fish over there, plenty mullet over there. And he [HA's father] used to bring his net, and from the pier, he used to go out and throw, eh? There were other Haoles, but, you see, where he goes, we don't know. Only the old-timers know. The most famous people we know, you see.

MK: So, when you had this first store, you had customers like the Holts, the Lemons . . .

HA: And the Cunha.

MK: Cunha. And you had people like Prince Kūhiō?

HA: Yeah.

MK: Okay. Steiners.

HA: Steiners, yeah.

MK: This Mr. Weil, you remember.

HA: Yeah. Because they used to keep on coming [to the store] even when I was five, six, seven, eight [years old]. Used to walk down, you see, to our store and stay in the store, chew the fat for some time with my dad and my mother, you know. But other people just come buy and then gone, so we don't know.

MK: How did these people chew the fat with your issei mother and father, those days?

HA: Well, my father knew little bit English. My mother knew a little bit. She understand; she couldn't speak. But my dad was good in Spanish, you know. Oh, he can speak fluent Spanish. Because when he got the store, he used to go out and sell, too. Around Diamond Head--you know where the driving range? By, you know where the Sunray Market--Tanaka Store--Sunray? Sunray, the corner store [at 3158 Monsarrat Avenue]. One grocery store, hamburger stand. Right across, there used to be Campbell, big cow ranch. Charlie Martin, we used to call, he was an old man at the time when I know. When I was about fifteen, sixteen [years old], he must be around sixty-something [years old] at the time. He [HA's father] used to go over there and then sell lot of this bread, sugar, coffee, milk. And go to this Spanish people place. So, he used to speak Spanish, good Spanish, too. He has to learn Spanish. He used to go with a horse and buggy, too, you know. Those days are horse and buggy, you see. Then this Charlie Martin them, well, naturally, they had a big cow ranch, so they used to buy two loaves bread, in those days which was plenty. Those days, five cents a loaf, I guess. Yeah, was about five cents a loaf. One one-pound loaf was five cents.

MK: You know, like now days, a lot of people walk into the store and buy things. In those days, how about delivery service?

HA: We used to deliver. I showed you the picture in our open car.

MK: Mm hmm [yes], in front of the first store?

HA: Yeah, in front the first store, you see. That was some time later, anyway, about after the war [i.e., World War I], 1920. . . . In 1918, I think, I remember, the war was over, eh? Nineteen fourteen to 1918. And we had groceries, and all kinds, all wide open. We go from one place to another. I used to follow. That's when we had an automobile later on. We used to deliver. And we had an employee over there. He drives. I cannot drive, too young. I used to go help. We don't need no watchman. Bread, milk, all standing. We just leave in the car on the road and deliver the bread, butter, and milk, or cheese to the house. Come out, and go to the next one. And we used to take orders by phone. The old-fashioned phone. You know, the box, eh? Box, hang up. Yeah, we used to take [orders]. The place no more phone, my dad used to go there, write down [the order]. And come home, they used to make the orders, put 'em in a box, and deliver.

MK: Gee, and how did the customers pay?

HA: Monthly. Sometimes, they don't pay us, yeah? Yeah. Two months, three months. But in those days, they usually paid, though, those olden days. They're permanent people and they don't run away like today. Today, oh. Today they're here, tomorrow they're gone. And that's how, as times went on, then we started to get a bigger customer, you know. Times went on. The Castles, the Dillingham, the Erdman, the Paul Fagan, and this Adams, all around the Diamond Head. That's years later.

MK: You know, that first store that you had, what were the hours like for the store?

HA: No such thing as hours, boy. Sometimes, people come real early, knock, we have to open 5, 6 o'clock, and then close up. And then, open about 7 or 8 [o'clock]. And then, night was late, though. Night, I think they were closing about 10, 11 o'clock, those days with one lamp in the store. Those days, you don't have to worry about burglars or you don't have to worry about holdup. You see, you don't have to, nothing. We used to have a vegetable outside, orange box, wooden box. We used to naraberu this daikon, and cabbage, and carrots. Right in the open, you know. Right in the front on a wooden box. And the icebox in the back. Nighttime, we take 'em in. And the next day, my mother wash 'em and bring 'em out. So, by the time, end of the day, it's almost dry. So, that was later on years.

But the first time, after they quit the vegetable peddler, only grocery store. But they found out that only groceries, you know, people were asking for potatoes, onions, and all; naturally, he used to buy. You know, he used to buy from Downtown from a Chinese place. Ah Leong. People Downtown, they know Ah Leong. Everybody knows him, the old people. Ah Leong Grocery. One man used to answer two

phones. And then, he used to go and get this adding machine, like that. And he used to write on. And this side goes write this side. The phone ring over here, this side, like that. Oh, he was sitting down, taking order. They used to have deliveries to the store, you know. This one time, I still remember. My dad ordered something, I don't know. No more money to pay for the day. Was only about twenty or twenty-five dollars. "Tomorrow pay."

"Tomorrow pay? No, no can, no can." So, they took the groceries back.

So, the following day, "Oh, we got the money today."

So, naturally, they brought 'em back again the next day. Their store was somewhere around King Street, I don't know. Ah Leong? Famous Ah Leong Store. That was about fifty, sixty years ago, no? We used to buy groceries from there. My dad used to buy everything--rice, potatoes, onions. Well, it's a small store, but they were doing the bulk of the business, I think, those days--Chinese, Ah Leong. If you meet some old people in Downtown or people who know Ah Leong Store, they know. Famous Ah Leong Store.

MK: You know, the store [i.e., Aoki Store], who was actually running the store day to day?

HA: My mother and sister. My dad used to go out, take orders, and deliver. And in the meantime, he had one working person. I remembered Okimoto. Of course, he died several years ago. He used to work for us. He died at eighty [years of age], I think.

MK: I know that the first store was there from about before World War I to about 1935 when you built the second store . . .

HA: No, we moved to that 'Ōhūa and Kalākāua [Avenues] a few years before that.

MK: Before 1935?

HA: Yeah. Before building. There was another. We had a chance. "Location is better," he said. And our side, Ibaraki took over. Ibaraki Store. And we moved to Kalākāua and 'Ōhūa [Avenues]. We had a store for about five years or so, or something like that. Nineteen thirty, eh? [Nineteen] thirty-five, that's when we started to build our new store.

MK: Oh, okay. So, the first store, you had from about before World War I to about 1930, then you moved to the other side?

HA: Yeah. Before, you know, the concrete store came up, we had a wooden store at Kalākāua and 'Ōhūa [Avenues], yeah?

MK: So, from the time your family opened the first store till the time they moved to the second location, the 1930 location, at 'Ōhūa and

Kalākaua [Avenues], how many workers were there working at the store?

HA: Oh, before, they had only one. One or so, you see. We had all wooden building, just like. . . . I don't know if they have that kind of store in Wahiawā or someplace. You know, old sort of wooden shacks, like that. They're all wooden, eh? This corner, so no window on the side, but only front had a window.

MK: And those days, from 1912 to 1930, who were your neighboring businesses back then? Who were the neighboring businesses?

HA: What do you mean? Neighbors or who used to come by?

MK: No, like the cleaners, the . . .

HA: Oh, the Chinese laundry?

MK: . . . the Chinese laundry. Try tell me from your Paoakalani side, down the row. Who was there?

HA: Our store was right on the corner, Paoakalani. Next was Kapi'olani Clothes Cleaners. Next was a Chinese laundry. And next, that's later on came in, they built that house right on the river. They had a river over there. One taxi-stand, two car. Kuniyuki Taxi Stand. One of the Kuniyuki's son--well, before you was born, anyway--working for the government. I think government employment, something like a department, I think, he's working. He must be around sixty. . . .

(Third person enters room, interview interrupted.)

MK: Okay, so you're going to draw a map for me, then? (HA draws map.)

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So, originally, you moved from Paoakalani [Avenue] to the 'Ōhua [Avenue] side?

HA: Yeah. We stayed there [at a pre-existing store on 'Ōhua Avenue side] five years, and then after 1935, we built the big one [again, at 'Ōhua Avenue]. The biggest in Waikīkī at the time.

MK: Okay. So, back then, when you folks had the first store on this Paoakalani [Avenue] side, who were your competitors in this area? Back when you folks first started?

HA: Oh, because that time, they weren't doing too much. And this [Okasago] store [on 'Ōhua Avenue and Kalākaua Avenue] wasn't doing too much either. Hardly any. So, this was no problem, no competitor, just

like. They had a small store, just selling few things. The husband died on this Okasago Store, so we bought 'em out, and we came here [Ōhūa Avenue]. Came here. And then, this Ibaraki took over over here [Paoakalani Avenue].

MK: Okay. So, you bought out Okasago because the husband died?

HA: Yeah.

MK: And the Ibarakis moved over into your original corner at Paoakalani [Avenue].

HA: Yeah. And then, after that, they built the two-story house, you know. And then, they have two-story over here. That's around 1935, too. I think, 1935, 1936, something. And this river was covered. See, the river . . .

MK: You mean, the stream was filled in, in about the 1930s?

HA: Yeah, 1930s. I don't know what month. When the Ala Wai Canal was built, they covered all these. Under this bridge, that's when the Asukas' son died. We went--me, Sasaki, Asuka--three of us went. And Asuka boy died, and we two. . . . It was fortunate that we living today. I told you, the water is only this deep.

MK: It's only waist deep.

HA: Yeah. And we were small, so he got drowned, see? That's why, I still remember that. I cannot forget. When we were about six years old, I think. Five or six. We were small kids, you know. Only waist deep, ordinarily, you don't die. It was too shallow. But he can't reach. And then, I know those people walked in the water with their legs, and they found the body. And the people, not here; only here, you see, somewhere. (HA indicates depth of water as being waist-deep.)

MK: It's not chin deep, but just waist.

HA: Yeah, yeah.

MK: And going back to the neighbors in your area, you were telling me that you were good friends with the Chinese laundryman. Tell me about this laundryman.

HA: Oh, they had this solid--you know, this iron? This kind. The iron heater was. . . . And then, over here, dial. They put the irons all around like this, so they can put the iron slantways, yeah? Right around, about four, I think. Right around. They put a coal in here. You see, in the iron [heater]. And then, with the iron, they used to [press clothes], like that.

MK: Do the laundry, yeah?

- HA: Not charcoal. In the iron, no more charcoal. Solid iron. They used to iron that.
- MK: So, they used to heat the irons against this heater that was heated by charcoal?
- HA: Yeah.
- MK: How was your relationship with this Chinese laundryman?
- HA: Well, he used to come buy. . . . I don't know, little stuff, he come buy, eh? We got [to be] friends. We could just go across--right, only three doors, eh? One, two, three doors, go over there. And he used to like me. I know that he used to like me very much. So, every day, from morning till night, I used to hang around there. Because my mother, she don't take care of me, eh? She's too busy with the store. My dad is in and out, in and out. He likes fishing, so every spare time, he used to go out fishing across the street. You know, Kōhiō Beach, now, eh? Across the street, because the stone wall, and all water, eh? From the place, he used to see fishes, and then from there, he used to throw net. That's why, actually, my mother was watching the store.
- And then, years later, when she was ten, I think--ten, eleven [years old]--the third sister got hit by a car. Of course, she's dead and gone now. She died at the age of fifty-three. In those days, you don't see cars too much. Maybe one hour, one; two hours, one. But just an accident, you know. The car wen hit her. Her legs busted up, so she was in the hospital for eight months with the legs sticking up like this. She went hospital, that's way down Kuakini [Hospital area] somewhere, you know. That's where she was. But first, when we got the store, only me and my sister, only two. Then the third child was born, eh? And then, down the line.
- MK: You mentioned that you used to always go to that laundryman's place and he would carry you, and . . .
- HA: Yeah, and carry me. And then, he used to give me five cents, and then some manapua [i.e., mea'ono-pua'a]. Manapua, five cents, he used to buy for me, things like that. So, I used to go over there. Gee, the manapua tasted good, you know. Oh, yeah, in those days, five cents, stuff, went a long ways, you know.
- MK: And then, how about the other businesses? As a little boy, would you be visiting the other businesses down the row, too?
- HA: No. No, no. No, because other people too busy, can't be bothered with young kids. And the Chinese, well, he had more time than money, you know. He was the boss, more or less, and he had three men working for him just like. Probably they was getting about fifty cents a day or something. From China, I think, yeah? He was only sitting down, smoking, every time. He had more time to carry me. That time, I used to go and sit on his lap. That's why, I used

to go over there. I must be around four or five [years old].

MK: And then, so, later on in the '30s, by '35, you've built up a new building on the 'Ōhūa [Avenue] corner, yeah? Why did you folks decide to do that?

HA: Well, I don't know. My dad's idea was to. . . . You know, the whole building cost him only \$10,000. That building, if you happen to build it today, would cost about a million bucks today. But at the time, \$10,000 is a big, big money, which it took him some time to pay, anyway. And the Filipino workers used to get--was fifty cents a day, and then went up to a dollar a day. They worked from 7 or 8 [o'clock] in the morning to about 6 at night for a buck. And dollar a day, you see. So, it was cheap, anyway, yeah? That's why we were able to build it. He made the biggest store in Waikīkī at the time. The whole Kalākāua [Avenue] didn't have that kind of big store.

MK: How big was it?

HA: Oh, that was about over 2,000 square feet. Two thousand square feet is big one, you see. On the corner. Almost the whole frontage, we took, you know.

MK: And try describe that store for me, inside and out, in 1935.

HA: Oh, that store was. . . . 'Ewa side, a solid wall. And the front had great big twelve-by-twelve, twelve-by-ten [foot] windows. We had six or eight windows, no? Big. Big windows so you can see outside. Big windows. Inside, we had an up-to-date refrigeration stuff, and up-to-date counters. Before, we had a shelf way up. Even the second old store we got was high. But that store, my dad was looking in some kind of book and saw all these low counters and wide. No more beam. No more post, rather. Was kind of big. And the butcher was on the 'Ewa side. Butcher counter. Had one, two, three butcher counters. It was a nice store at the time, but, now, it's obsolete, you see.

'Ōhūa [Avenue], yeah? The whole, over here was, it's about this shape. The side entrance was over here. Motor and engine room was over here. Big engine room. The counter was---we had three, I think. It's up-to-date. Three, we had, yeah. The butcher table, one, two, three tables. The store was all too big, but it came small. And people from all over town came over there. You know, after that, when we built, they said, "See the nice store he building. He must be rich or something," (chuckles) like that. You know, this Everybody's Super Market? Everybody's, they used to have, eh? The person that run that, Strombach, I know, he--long before Times and long before Foodland. No more supers [i.e., supermarkets] anyway, at that time. No more supers. They came to see the store. They said, oh, they're trying to copy the model, things like that. But it wasn't designed right, though.

MK: But you were saying that it was a rectangular-shaped store, with the

entrance on the corner of 'Ōhūa and Kalākaua [Avenues]. And there was a butcher section near that entrance with . . .

HA: Yeah. Grocery line was this way.

MK: . . . three counters.

HA: And then, on the corner, on this side, was a liquor store.

MK: You had a liquor section on the . . .

HA: Liquor section right here.

MK: . . . on the Diamond Head side of the store.

HA: Yeah. The counters, of course, was split, anyway. Cashier was right here. Cashier. Go around, go around, come out this way. Vegetable was here, you see. We had a refrigeration, big box, back here.

MK: Counters filled with goods, yeah?

HA: Yeah. And the refrigerators back here. Big chill box . . .

MK: Refrigerators in the back section.

HA: And then, back here, had a freezer. It was a big operation. That's when we had about two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve--fourteen people. Fourteen people, we used to have. Not from the beginning, but as the business went good, and then it went up to fourteen people. Then we were forced to close when the lease pau. That's when, then, Everybody's Market came in, then the Foodland came in, then the Times came in. So, it was just--the timing was good. The timing was good that we were forced to vacate because Hawaiian Regent came up over there. Hawaiian Regent Hotel. And moved the whole thing right back here and got smaller, which was all right. (Laughs)

MK: Okay. So, that was 1968 that you had to move to this Aoki Mini Mart here [at 2080 Kūhiō Avenue].

HA: Yeah. That's right.

MK: Okay. But before we get into the Aoki Mini Mart, I wanted to ask you what kind of services did the store continue to give once it built up?

HA: Oh, we were delivering. We had three trucks, delivery trucks. Delivering Diamond Head, Kāhala, and Mānoa. We have Mānoa and Punahou. And, of course, in Waikīkī. Around Waikīkī. Waikīkī, well, we wasn't too much interested in because the buying, Waikiki had transient people, eh? Olden days, it was family people, the permanent people. Then gradually, from 1968, more of this transient people started coming to Waikīkī.

MK: That's from 1968, though?

HA: [Nineteen] sixty-eight. In and out, in and out. But Mānoa, and Kāhala, Diamond Head, the permanent people. They don't move.

MK: How would you describe your customers back then in the big store?

HA: Oh, the first thing, they come, they said who's who. And of course, we had fourteen employees. I was still going to school that time. So, he took the name, then he says okay. That's when we started to get [clients] Dillingham, Castle, and Erdman, and Adams, and Wilcox. And all the Diamond Head, Kāhala, where all the tycoons used to stay.

MK: How [were] the hours by that time? By the 1930s, '40s, '50s?

HA: We were open quite early, but. . . . See, at that time, we used to go down and pick up our bread from Love's Bakery--Iwilei. You know, Iwilei? Over there. Before they got big, you know, we used to go over there, wrap our own, and we used to bring home about fifty loaves, hundred loaves. And we used to go over there 5 o'clock [a.m.]. So, the hours was--the store was open around 6 o'clock [a.m.] to about, I think was 10 o'clock at night. Yeah, 10 o'clock. Ten or 11, something like that.

MK: Those years, who actually ran the store?

HA: Oh, we had an employee, a manager. He took care of the whole thing. That's when we had bookkeeper, and we had butcher. We had three butchers at first, then came down to two. You know, before the competition came up. And delivery was the main thing we had. We were competing with May's Market at the time. I don't know if you remember or not. May's Market. They went out of business, too, you see. And then, Mac's Market took over their customers. We took some over. But competition got so rough, we gave up deliveries. In the meantime, we had to vacate. (Chuckles) Just right.

MK: What happened to your mother and father's role in the store by that time?

HA: Oh, they were not too much aggressive. They come in the store, they stay around--you know, putting around. They didn't do too much over heavy, or too much over. . . . He let the manager run the whole thing. He tells the manager what to do, eh? The second store. He has somebody, that's why. Before, he used to run and she used to run. The old store. She had to run or else nobody else do it. But since we got the bigger store, then she had a manager.

MK: When you folks had this bigger store, you also had World War II that happened. How did that affect the business?

HA: Oh, World War II came up. Oh, and the business, very, very good. But since my dad was an alien, we lost our liquor license that time.

All the persons who was alien at the time weren't able to sell any liquor--beer, wine, or things. So, the business came down one time. After the war, then we got our liquor license again. But it's too late, eh?

MK: You know, during the war, I've been told that there were a lot of military men in Waikīkī. How did [they] affect your business?

HA: Well, those didn't affect too much. Of course, people who were selling liquor was doing good. But no service boys will buy bread, sugar, coffee. What they going to do? They used to buy candies. Cookie, candies, that's all. Other stuff, they go to camp. They can eat everything they want. And they want beer and wine, well, they go to stores next door, eh? Next door, somewhere around there, they used to have, you see. That's why, didn't do too good during the war.

MK: You know, one year after the war, you have the 1946 tidal wave. How did that affect your business because you were right across the street from the beach?

HA: Oh, yeah, I remember that. We were very much worried, you know, because we were right in front. We can see the water coming. You know, was terrible thing. At first, I said, "Oh, look! The ocean is drying up." Big fish like that was jumping around, you know. That thing was just almost dry, Waikīkī. That's the first time I've seen tidal wave. I didn't know. It was way out. It was quite a distance out. We didn't know.

Some beach boys around there said, "Let's go out, catch the fish."

And this, I don't know, civil defense or some other people said, "No, no, no, no. Don't go out. You're going to get killed."

And then, few seconds later, you see the waves, was like this.

MK: Rolling.

HA: Rolling, rolling. They came right up to our door. Didn't go in the store. So, [if the wave advanced] about a foot more, it was going in the store. Went over the road, the whole Waikīkī. The big waves went over the road, and went into, I think, further down. Ibaraki Store, around there, I think, was little lower, I guess. Our place was few inches higher. And then one house was right in the front of there. And the wall was high over there. So, [at] that block, [the wave] came right over the road. Terrific, that tidal wave. Was strong. Oh, boy. Then everybody had cleared the ocean. They made it clear, they chased 'em away. You can see the fishes jump. Oh, was terrible. We were scared to death. We thought the whole store, we thought the plate glass--big plate glass, you know. We had, I think, was a ten-by-ten or ten-by-eight [foot], or something like that. Great big glass was going to bust. The whole windows over there, if the waves hit, guarantee it'll break, you

know. But it just missed it. That's the first time I ever seen the tidal wave. I didn't know how the tidal wave worked.

MK: Gee, so you were fortunate, then.

HA: Yeah. Oh, the scary thing, that kind. If you out surfing, you gone. Anybody swimming, they're gone. But was it that time that Hilo had a big tidal wave? Ninety, almost hundred people was drowned or killed, or disappeared, no? Yeah, that's the time, I think. Was a big one, Waikīkī. Boy, you see, I don't know, maybe about a mile out, that thing was. Maybe not quite, I don't know. You can see from the store, you can see in the ocean.

MK: How did it affect the other parts of Waikīkī?

HA: Oh, Moana Hotel? Plenty water went inside. That section, around there. In the lower part, I heard that. And then, Royal Hawaiian [Hotel], they had water around there. All around there had water coming in. But wasn't too bad, though, no? All around Waikīkī wasn't too bad because they have this stone wall, eh? I think Moana [Hotel], around there, no stone wall, so they came right in. You can see that. From Waikīkī, we can see. The waves was jumping to about second story, you know. Hit Moana Hotel corner, that building, and then the waves was splashing over. We used to look over there. "Look the waves over there." Terrific, they come, bang, rolling up. They go up two story. So, they had pretty rough water, then, I think. I understand that quite a lot of water went into the bottom part of the Moana Hotel. We thought, at first, to put sandbags around the store, but, chee, the thing came so fast, we can't even get sand. Yeah. Because they said tidal wave will come over and roll. Sure enough, it did, but we escaped all that damages.

MK: And then, you know, after the 1946 tidal wave, and then you have the '50s with more tourists coming in, yeah? How did tourism affect your business at that big store?

HA: Tourists, well, not too much, because not too much came in at the time, eh? When did the planes started coming in? I don't know . . .

MK: About 1959. You know, more . . .

HA: Yeah, yeah. It was just picking up little bit, not too much, I think. Because we were mostly interested in local trade. We didn't have anything that good for the tourists. They're not going to buy bread, butter, or cheese, or anything like that. Even today, same thing. The hotels no more kitchen. They go buy the bread, and cereal, and how they're going eat? They have only bed in the room. The reason why, right across the street, they [i.e., a hotel] used to have [kitchens]. They took 'em all off because it was a mess after they left. The plates broken, cups thrown around, and water running, the faucet, then icebox wide open. And to clean up, they said, takes one hour. Most, see. The labor costs went so high.

They couldn't keep the maids in one room one hour or else they need about 100 maids, you know. They took the whole kitchenettes all off. So, they don't have any. So, it doesn't affect too much on us. In fact, if they had kitchenette, that's another thing. But in Waikīkī, the old hotels don't have any. Most hotels don't have.

MK: So, your clientele really was more local, permanent trade?

HA: Yeah, at the time, before, too. And today, just as bad.

MK: I know that, later on, they widened Kalākaua [Avenue], right?

HA: Oh, yeah. Before, it was narrow, eh?

MK: How did that affect your business when they did that?

HA: Well, we didn't have, in the first place, customers that drive to here, see. If I stay in Kaimukī, why should I come from Kaimukī to Waikīkī? Or Mānoa to Waikīkī, or Nu'uano to Waikīkī? See? They won't drive just for a loaf of bread, a pound of butter, or pork and beans. They're not going to drive to Waikīkī. That didn't affect us too much. Only little bit of the transient, little bit of these houses they have at present. That's all, not much now. Mostly hotels and apartments.

MK: And then, I know, 1968, you folks moved over here [2080 Kalākaua Avenue], right? I was wondering, can you again explain why you folks had to move over here?

HA: Well, the lease expired. We were forced to. We were chased out after the lease. We had the [lease for] thirty-five years. After thirty-five years, we had to move. And this place was bought, my dad bought it. He was planning to make a store, anyway. About forty years, yeah? Thirty-five, forty years ago, he bought this place at a very cheap price. So, he said, someday, we might have to move after the lease. Sure enough. So that was why. It took him fifteen years to pay up, though. Because he bought it for, I think, about two dollars a square foot. Today, they're estimating, I think, sixty or seventy [dollars]? A square foot. The City and County or whatever estimated that much.

MK: And how much of this property do you folks own?

HA: Sixty-seven hundred square feet, 6,700.

MK: Does that include the next door, Laurence Hata's?

HA: Yeah, Hata's and the parking lot. And right around back here, which is very small.

MK: Now, you know, what do you folks specialize in, in terms of goods and services?

HA: Well, there's no service now. Today, it's different. We don't give service. People come in, transient mostly. That's all we have, most transient. Local people have disappeared from Waikīkī already, anyway. They sell the houses, they move elsewhere. Because one house in Waikīkī, the tax is too high. One house, eh? And the property tax going up, up, up, see. If one house or two houses, it's not worth it. So, they either lease it or sell out. They move to Mānoa, or Nu'uānuu, or Kāhala, or 'Āina Haina and somewhere, we don't know.

MK: Now days, how is the store run?

HA: Run by the family. We all take turn. It's more or less a retired job for us. Yeah, mostly all of them collecting Social Security, see. So, we cannot make more than, how much? Five thousand [dollars] a year? Something like that. Of course, we don't make that now, so we taking it easy, that's why. We don't hustle. We sell whatever we can. It's a retired person's job to kill time every day.

MK: (Chuckles) So, who among your family members are working now days in the store?

HA: We have seven. Seven because we had nine children. One died. One out working somewhere else. That's seven. You see? So, seven left.

MK: So, all seven of you at some time are working at the store now days?

HA: Yeah. The morning shift, afternoon shift. We work only about thirty hours a week. Short hours, eh? Good, retired job. Retired job.

MK: How's the competition now days for over here?

HA: Well, Waikīkī is not too bad. People, they don't have cars. They only walk around, walking people. So, price is not the object, no? It's convenience. People around here, they're going to buy heavy, heavy buying, they go to supers [i.e., supermarkets]. The heavy buying, big buying, eh? All right, for one loaf of bread, they're not going to drive up some super way up. Or pound of hamburger, like that. They're not going up there, too much trouble. So, whatever they run short, or one apple, or one orange, they just get it here. Or bananas. Why go driving around, fighting the traffic? That's why, it's a convenience store now.

MK: So, the store has really changed, then, from the time your mom and dad started the original one . . .

HA: Yeah, my mom and dad. Yeah, oh, big changes. Waikīkī had changed, so we had to change, too.

MK: You know, I think, right now, I should get into your history.

HA: My history?

- MK: Yeah. Okay? So, little bit about your history. I was wondering, what is your exact birthdate?
- HA: April 16, 1910.
- MK: You have nine brothers and sisters, yeah?
- HA: Yeah, three brothers, six sisters. Number three died, you know, Dorothy.
- MK: If you can remember, way back, you told me that when you were a small boy, even though your family had moved away from the Moana [Hotel] area, you used to go over there, play.
- HA: Yeah, that's right. Because the place you're born, you're very natsukashii. The Japanese ga natsukashii. Yeah, I was born there, so even five or six years old, I used to walk. No cars, nothing. No dangers. Walk over there and see the old people and friends. And there were kids down there, you know, the same age. Five or six, like that.
- MK: What did you folks do in that area as kids? That Moana [Hotel] area?
- HA: I don't know. We were doing crazy stuff, I think. With those kids, we used to go right back [ma uka] of there. Go to the banana field and pick some bananas. And they used to have rice field. We used to go in the rice field--two or three or four kids of us--rice field and see the Chinese banging that kerosene can, chasing the birds away, eh? And we get hungry, so bananas, you see. Oh, nice bananas. Go over there and help ourselves to bananas, because plenty banana trees, eh? Ah, they don't care, us kids, you know. That's why, they don't bother. We don't cut the big branch. We can't carry 'em anyway. That's why, I used to go over there, and I think I was playing with Hikida. He's older than me, though, I think, one of them. And the others, my age, or some's younger. There were quite a lot of kids, too, in that area where I was born.
- And I used to eat. They used to feed me. Going back to the store is quite a distance, you know, from Moana to 'Ōhua [Avenue], eh? In those days, no more telephone. The only communication, you either have to go there and look for 'em, or walk there, call for him. No more transportation. Later on, we got bicycle; and later on, we got automobile, you see. But nobody going use automobile just about three or four blocks away. No more roads in the first place. To go in the camp [i.e., cottages occupied by Moana Hotel employees], all narrow road. No more car. Walk.
- In fact, behind, this mountain side of Moana Hotel, they used to have a river coming from up. But they covered the river when they made that canal. Before that, I used to go over there, catch some 'o'opu, and catch this 'ōpae, you know. 'Ōpae, we caught 'ōpae for bait, go fishing, like that. They have river. The river is, boy,

if today, some parts was like this. It was too deep for us, like this, till the stomach. That's deep for us. We were only short kids. The water would come up to here. So, had bridge, the olden days. We go over there. We had things to do, you know. But no more omocha. You know, omocha, like . . .

MK: Toys?

HA: Toys. Like today. Like today, you get so much, all kind omocha, toys. Well, we're enjoying more, but there were none in those days. Only thing, we go catch crab around the river. Catch crab, and catch shrimps like that. And then, go to banana field, go to rice field. Walk around somewhere around there, you know. But we don't go too far, you see. There's nothing else to do around there.

MK: So, when you moved away from that Moana area, where was your first house?

HA: First house was right back here. You know, Paoakalani [Avenue]? The store in the front, and the house, back here, adjoining that.

MK: What did your house look like when you were small?

HA: Oh, just a square house. And bedroom, and a kitchen. And I think had a toilet right here, I don't know, somewhere. It's fairly good-sized, though. Bigger than today, you know--today's area, you know. But we used to sleep in futon. No more bed, see? And then, under the house, I used to raise chickens. Under the house was high, you know. About almost five feet. I think was five feet, you see. In those days, in the olden days, even that place we stayed and born in Moana [Hotel employee cottages], the house, you had to climb up so many steps. Under the house is about five feet or more, where you put your junks, all the things, you know. But in Waikīkī, I used to raise chickens. I used to like and we used to have cat, dog.

MK: How about a yard area? Did your family have a yard area?

HA: Well, small yard. Over here, the laundry people over here, and then this clothes cleaner had a house over here, and washroom was back here. And the area is, I think, about 500 square feet, though. Quite a big area. Where they hang the clothes, you know, the laundry? They wash and hang. And then, we used to have this side, and our house is alongside, eh? Used to go up the steps. And then, their kitchen, and the clothes cleaner kitchen. You stretch out, can reach, you know, almost. In those days, yeah, the olden days. And not the kind of thick walls like today or something like that. This one-by-twelve, we call it. One inch by twelve inch wide. It was liveable, but, you know, not as good . . .

MK: How did your house compare with the other Japanese family houses in the area?

- HA: Well, the people like Asuka over there, they had a little better house and, more or less, a cottage. But alongside a store, you cannot build nothing, anyway. You know, back of stores? You have to go as is every time. So, our living quarters were more junk than Asuka or "Rusty" Holt. "Rusty" Holt was more or less a house. More or less a house, you see. If a house, they have a little better living room and a kitchen, and things. But store, kitchen and living room, all junk. (Chuckles)
- MK: In those days, when you were still a small boy, who were your pals in the neighborhood? Your friends?
- HA: Oh, we had Hawaiians, Japanese, and Chinese. All kind, mixed kind, we used to play. We play with everybody. No more segregation. Never had colored people in those days, yeah? No more colored, but Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiians. We go to Waikīkī [Elementary] School, eh? All of them there. We play together.
- MK: Tell me the names of some of the people you used to play with when you were small.
- HA: Gee, I know the name, only "Chino." "Chino" was his nickname. "Chino," oh, Guerrero. "Chino" Guerrero, and then Tony De Rego, and then. . . . De Rego--Pordagee, you know, that's Tony De Rego. His brother is "Step-and-a-Half," we call him because he's one side short. Tony's the elder one. I used to go his place after school like that, and we play football, baseball, and things like that. Of course, after seven, eight [years old], we don't play with omocha already, eh? Only about four, five, six, we play with omochas, eh? And then, we used to go surfing quite a lot. I used to be a good surfer. Every day, in fact, I used to go surfing with those boys. You heard the name Duke Kahanamoku? His brother Louis, and another brother. Louis and. . . . I forgot the other brother. Duke was much older, but he used to come in our store, too, you know, buy stuff. Yeah, he used to come Waikīkī. And then, the Stonewall Gang. I go over there listen, they go play the ukulele, guitar. Just go there, sit around and listen, that's all.
- MK: What was the Stonewall Gang, anyway? Everybody talks about this Stonewall Gang.
- HA: All Waikīkī boys. They got nothing to do, so they go out on the beach, sit--used to get stone wall. That's stone wall, so "Stonewall Gang." The stone wall. Like "Step-and-a-Half" [De Rego] used to play guitar; and some play ukulele. I forgot the name, but then only guitar and ukulele, that's all. And no more people passing, eh? (Telephone rings.) When get little dark, everybody go home. No more light, eh?
- Like Saturday and Sunday, I'm in the water. Waikīkī, in the water, surfing. And those days, you cannot buy no surfboard, you know. You make your own. I used to make my own surfboard.

MK: How did you learn to make your surfboard and to surf?

HA: Oh, well, you know, when we're kids, we learn, eh? First, we go surfing, we only go near the shore. When we get little better, we go out, little bigger waves. When get little more better, we go out. And when we see other people making surfboard, I go over there, help, you know. Pick up the rubbish. Watch make surfboard. Then when I got to about twelve, fourteen, fifteen [years old], then we go buy the lumber, wide redwood and we go buy kanna. Of course, no money to buy kanna . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 13-26-1-85; SIDE ONE

MK: Okay, you were telling me about making the surfboard? You would . . .

HA: Yeah. Take about four, five days.

MK: . . . shave it down, shape it, then you would . . .

HA: Sandpaper. Sandpaper, make it smooth, everything. The shape, you know. The shape, we cut it all. And then, we sandpaper it, and then put varnish on it. Takes five, sometimes six [days]. Sometimes, a week, because if school, we cannot make in school days. After school, like that. And the school kids help each other, you know. We used to go make together, help each other, and we go surfing. The board is so heavy--you know, redwood--and we were small. To carry that is a big load for us. So what we do is leave the surfboard on the beach. One day, all right; two day, all right; three day, all right; four day, all right. Never run away. Right in front of the store is the ocean, see. We just leave 'em on the sand. There was a house in front of the beach, right on the beach. Leave 'em alongside. But that didn't last too long. Then, they started stealing each other's one. That's how many years later, anyway. But when I was . . . Was about, I think, eleven, twelve, thirteen [years old], somewhere around [that age]. You know, too heavy to carry. Right across the street, too heavy. Just leave 'em down there. But today, even one minute, you can't leave no surfboard, anyway. It disappears, see.

MK: And then, who were boys that you used to go out surfing with?

HA: Sometimes with Kahanamoku, one of the Kahanamoku brothers, or school kids, you know. Right in front of the store. And then, some days, they used to come down the beach and leave the surfboard behind the store, because behind the store had big space. They say, "We going surfing tomorrow." That's Sunday, you know. Saturday, Sunday. So, naturally, they leave it here. Nobody take, nobody take. So, next day, we go out surfing. And those elder persons--those sixteen, seventeen, eighteen--those boys, they go out surfing big waves; and

we're small, we stay way in, surfing for small waves.

MK: What did you call the area that you used to surf when you were . . .

HA: In the front of Kūhiō Beach, I think, they call that. Right in front of Hawaiian Regent [Hotel]. They call it "Kūhiō Beach," I think. Still call it "Kūhiō Beach," huh?

MK: Okay. How about swimming? How much swimming did you folks do back then?

HA: Oh, surfing and swimming, together. We ride the waves; sometimes, fall off. The board run away. Then we swim. We have to learn how to swim. I don't know how I learned, but I know I became a good swimmer. We were trying to beat Duke [Kahanamoku]. Sometimes, he swimming down Waikīkī. We can't keep up at all. He take one stroke while I taking twenty strokes just like. Yeah, he was big boy, too, yeah? I used to know Duke Kahanamoku very well. Oh, lot of those boys that stayed in Waikīkī--Waikīkī Stonewall boys, and then the Waikīkī, all the school. We used to go to the same school, anyway, Waikīkī [Elementary] School. So, we go with anyone, go surfing. Boy, I used to love surfing. And I used to be a good surfer, too.

When I got a little better, I used to make a bigger board, about twelve. . . . Bigger than. . . . And put two--two guys used to go out. Two guys, yeah. But those boards are too heavy, you know. That's why, we can't take it around, you know. Then, gradually, then after the redwood, another kind of light wood came in from South America somewhere. That board was little lighter. Even you make big, it's lighter. So, that, we made that kind of board, and it was kinda expensive. And then, after that, then this regular plastic came in, I think. Plastic. And today, it's all fiberglass or plastic, yeah? Today, nobody make their own board. They buy, and they have a nice board. And cost like anything--\$200, \$150, \$200, like that. Those days, nobody can buy even fifty dollars.

MK: So, surfing's changed a lot, then, yeah?

HA: Oh, yeah. And those days, when you go surfing, any part of Waikīkī, you see two or three surfing. Whether it's weekend or weekday, or what. Weekdays, nobody. So, you know, not crowded. Today, each person, I think, you run over somebody, you know. So many people are surfing, you see. Some days, we come back from school, we go in the store. Look, "Oh, nice waves." Ah, go. We can look outside. It's just outside the store, you see. If no waves no good, rough, well, we don't go.

MK: How about as a young boy, though, when you came back home to school, what kind of chores did you have in the store?

HA: Well, in the store, we had. . . . Sometimes, I go deliver with those boys. Sit in the car. When I got nothing to do, you know, just sit

in the car. And stay around the store, I used to sweep. Nothing else to do, sweep. And they tell me wipe the shelves, all right, okay. Something to keep me busy, you know.

And then, when I got little older, I used to like to take photographs. Camera bug. I don't know, somewhere, I used to buy cameras--you know, little camera. Box camera. Used to have a regular box camera, those days. Then from box camera, then came a little better one. In those days, you buy it for--the best kind--ten dollars or seven dollars. Box camera was about three dollars or something, eh? Two-something or three, you see. Took fairly good pictures, though. And then, I met this Hata's [i.e., Laurence Hata] father. He used to be a process man. I used to go in there. Oh, Ibaraki [i.e., member of Ibaraki Store family], before that, long ago. He used to develop pictures. I used to go there nighttime, evening. He developed, and, you know, you have to have lot of water to wash the film. So, I had lots of things to do at night. No time to go and fool around other places. Yeah, go over there, and then, that takes about two hours or three hours. Time to go home already, you know. Watch them paste the pictures on the thing and sort the pictures. Because Ibaraki used to--as a side business--he used to develop and cut it up, like that. Whenever I get time, I used to go there.

MK: And then, you mentioned a Mr. Hata.

HA: Yeah, next door . . .

MK: What was his first name?

HA: Laurence Hata. He was a schoolteacher. And then, he had a little shack right back in the parking lot over there. They had a house over there. Two story--two, eh? Whitman used to be in a corner. And on top used to be a apartment. One, two, three, I think. So, he had a place there. I used to go in there and help him, too. Because I like photograph stuff. Anything regards to photographing. And he used to teach me how to take pictures, things like that. I used to come from way down the other side, come over here, and help him--about processing and things like that. (Chuckles)

MK: I was wondering, you know, like nighttimes or weekends, what did you do with your family? You know, your family was kind of big, lot of brothers and sisters.

HA: Yeah, but two of my sisters wasn't here, was in Japan. That, and the other one. They were in Japan for over ten years. And then, I went to Japan with my mother, too, you know. She took six or seven of us one time. And we stayed two months during the summer. Summer, you see, that place. Was summer, yeah. When I was about twenty, I guess, just before I went to Punahou, I think. . . . Oh, no, not twenty, way down, eighteen. . . . Oh, I was going to Punahou, I think. Went around the world.

MK: Huh?

HA: With my sister.

MK: Where did you folks go?

HA: From Kobe. We went to Kobe to Shanghai. From Shanghai--in those days, Japan was a powerful country, you know. From Shanghai to Hong Kong. Hong Kong to Bangkok. And then, Singapore, and then Sri Lanka. Used to be Ceylon, those days. And then, over to Suez, to Cairo, and then to Italy. And then, by train, to London. And no money. My sister was crying. I said, "How we going back? No money?" Then I had enough money to wire to Honolulu. My dad wen send us \$200 or \$300, I think. Just enough to go back from London by boat to New York, and the train to San Francisco, and back.

MK: What were you two doing traveling around like that?

HA: Just go around the world. I love to go travel, that's why. I was reading all kind of. . . . Gee, I'd like to see Cairo, Egypt, Greece. And India. I used to be good in geography, so I knew exactly where. With boat, you know. With boat, no plane those days.

MK: How did you afford to do something like that?

HA: Oh, I was saving up. And I paid for my sister, too. You know, around the world was so cheap on the boat. We're third class, you know. Not first class, second class. No, no. Oh, was tourist class, I think, not. . . . Third was more low. I think was a few hundred dollars. Two of us went around the world with \$400. And ran short of money in London. I got a picture of it in nineteen-something, anyway.

MK: That was when you were pretty grownup by then?

HA: Yeah. I was about eighteen, nineteen, I think. When I was going was summertime. Went to Japan, and I said, "Oh, instead of going back to Honolulu," I tell one of my sister--this sister didn't like to travel. So, the other sister that died--I said, "Ikō. Ikimashō. (Let's go.)" So, my sister was only, I think, about sixteen, I think. Sixteen, seventeen, something like that. We were too young. Lot of people thought, "Gee, the young couple. Young married couple." I said, "Kore imōto. (She is my younger-sister.)" Then, on the boat, we met this Japan boy scouts. They went to Hungary for a jamboree. We made friends, so from there, we always go all around, same place, same, with the tour bus. All around, same. Then we parted. We part with those guys in Hungary. Then we went from Hungary, we went to London.

MK: Really, kinda world travelers at a young age, yeah?

HA: Yeah, world travel. I had the guts. I don't know. I wasn't scared

at that time.

MK: Let me change the subject to back in Waikīkī. I've been told by some people that back in the old days when your family especially had the second store--you know, the 1935 store--the family used to sponsor all kinds of activities for the neighborhood. Like, they would bring in the movies with the benshi, and there would be bon dances in the back of the store.

HA: Yeah. Back of the store, bon dance . . .

MK: Tell me about the kind of activities, you know, the family helped bring to the neighborhood?

HA: Well, one word spread around fast, Waikīkī, in the camp, the whole camp [i.e., neighborhood]. And even though, like bon dance, that's only summer, yeah? Over there, get. And the guy--benshi--over there. At least 150 guys come around. Of course, not too much around Waikīkī. All the Japanese camps. There's Sasaki Camp, and Asuka no Camp. And then, this local people--Hawaiians, Haoles. They used to come around just to see, you know. Over there, one word, say, "Oh, bon dance." And then, the whole gang is right there, comes around.

MK: Who were the singers for the bon dances?

HA: Gee, some issei. Of course, they're gone already, but issei. I don't know the name, I forgot. Then, when we have movies. All mostly kids. At that time, teenagers, very little. Mostly ten, twelve, thirteen [years old]. And then, if movie, in the veranda. We used to get wide, big veranda. And they show a movie there.

MK: And then, what kind of movies did you folks show?

HA: Oh, Japanese movies.

MK: Would you remember the name of benshi who used to come?

HA: I forgot, boy, I don't know.

MK: What did you think about those movies?

HA: Well, at the time, oh, I was a young boy, no? So, they said simple, English, Japanese. You get together, it's easy was, in those days. Quick, they come around. Quick, one message would go the whole camp around.

MK: How about home services? I heard something about home services. Buddhist services that your family sponsored.

HA: Oh, it was Sunday school. It was Sunday school. Two girls used to come around, Sunday school, every Sunday. Used to be Dr. Uchida's daughter, and Teshima. And sometimes, different girls used to come

around. Probably, at the time, there were about--must be around twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, I think, no?

MK: And were they Christian service or Buddhist service?

HA: Buddhist. Buddhist service. So, you know, they read, eh? And all the kids, we sit down, we listen. Every Sunday, they used to have services around there. Because no place, Waikīkī, get a big veranda like that. Twenty, thirty, forty [people], okay.

MK: How many kids would come on a weekend for the Sunday school type service?

HA: Oh, twenty. Fifteen, twenty, maybe more sometimes, those days. Because we had a big yard, and a big veranda, so we were able to handle that, no?

MK: And then, someone else told me about baseball teams like Aoki's . . .

HA: No, we didn't have any. I don't think we had.

MK: No baseball teams?

HA: No, not baseball. I don't think so.

MK: Someone said that they kind of remembered maybe baseball teams connected with the stores or. . . .

HA: No. We used to go picnic with the group of. . . . That's when they had car. But old, junk Model-T Ford, sometimes. All this neighborhood stores, neighborhood restaurants, and neighborhood hotel workers, we used to go Kāhala, and we used to go nearby Hawai'i Kai, and then we used to go Waipahu, 'Ewa. That's quite a distance for us, you know, going down there. With about, oh, fifty, sixty. The store guys, they bring their employees, they bring the kids and wives, like that, all of them. So, forty, fifty, no? We tell 'em, "Meet us so-and-so, so-and-so." You know, bring our own bentō. And then, well, some, you share, you know. And then, at the picnic--more or less a picnic, eh?--and then, they had this sumō and running. Each store used to donate little thing. Well, this store donate shōyu, small bottle of shōyu. This store donate the catsup. Or this store donate crackers. Not a big thing, you see. Just donate something that doesn't spoil, you know. Each store bring 'em down there and the winner gets it. Oh, we were close, you know, in olden days. We used to go together, not every weekend, but especially, summertime, the kids have nothing to do, eh, we used to picnic. Just like today, like Ala Moana, they have 100, 150, yeah? All this something-something-kai--nani-nani kai (club so-and-so), like that. Something like that, yo.

MK: Okay. You know, for today, I think I'll end over here. And then, I want to come one more time and continue taping, okay?

HA: Yeah, okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 13-33-2-85

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Harold Aoki (HA)

March 26, 1985

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Harold Aoki at his office in Waikīkī, Honolulu, Hawai'i on March 26, 1985. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

Mr. Aoki, you know when we were looking at the photographs, we saw photographs of your family at the neighborhood picnics. Try and describe for me those picnics that the neighborhood used to have.

HA: We used to know about two weeks ahead. Two weeks, sometimes three weeks ahead. And us kids, you see, we go around, "Oh, we're going to have picnic. Oh, we're going to have. We're going somewhere." And we were so happy because in those days, we don't have too much toys, omocha nai, so no toys. That's why, when they go to picnic like that, oh, we were very, very happy. We waited for the day to come. Then, of course, we go around, we tell the next friends, "Oh, we're going picnic." They tell the father and mother to come along or we're going to meet so-and-so place. They say, "Where?" We used to go Nanakuli quite often, I think. And Waipahu. Quite a distance in those days, you know, with the junks. And then, those people who don't have cars, they hang on each other's car. You go down there. Of course, you bring your own bentō. And then, we used to make ours. My mother used to make. You know, when we get together, exchange. All kind, musubi, and all those things. It was big affair when we going to the country. Because, today, well, you have all the up-to-date things to play with, the kids. They don't enjoy picnic too much. But those days, when you say "picnic," we were crazy, see?

MK: And then, what would happen at these picnics?

HA: Oh, they used to have running race. And then, you know, close your eye or go put a band on, and mekakushi, they call mekakushi stuff. And then, you have to go to the place, and place like that. And then, baseball, and throwing sticks. You know, like. . . . We have to have sticks. How far can you throw. And we used to get prize, you know. Boy, we try our darndest thing to get a prize. Maybe a little handkerchief, or a little towel. Oh, it was big affair.

Today, you give 'em towel or handkerchief, they won't even look at you.

MK: And how about the fathers? What were they doing at the picnic?

HA: Oh, some of them was working at Moana Hotel. And some of them, storeowners. They waiters. And over there, they had this engineer. The engineer. They had a big machine over there [at Moana Hotel] which Fukuda used to. . . . Was an engineering man. Those helpers there. But mostly, it's Waikīkī. None from Mō'ili'ili or Kaimukī or Kapahulu. Just Waikīkī district used to go, you see. Because be too big, yeah? We cannot haul big people like that, you know.

MK: And then, in the picture [of a picnic] that I saw, the fathers are wearing sumō-tori outfits. Why were they wearing that?

HA: Oh, just--I don't know--just to take pictures. Because photographers only, out of fifty, sixty, sometimes only two or three person takes pictures, see. That including me. I was crazy. Get a little box camera. They just put on the clothes and everybody lined up. Snap, after that, pau, take off. And like sumō, they pretend they're going to wrestle. But no more this.

MK: The ring?

HA: Ring, no ring, eh? Just ordinary place. As you see in the pictures, no more, you see. We used to do that. And trying to keep the kids interesting, all kind. Anything in those days were interesting because we don't have the things what we have today. Even though you go to picnic, they have all kind of stuff to make the kids happy or enjoy or whatever it is.

MK: And then, how often did you folks have neighborhood picnics?

HA: Twice a year, I think. Not every month. There's one twice a year, usually. Because every time, well, everybody's working and can't go, so the most we had is twice. Sometimes, once a year. Because big affairs, you know, to us.

MK: You know, I've heard that in this section of Waikīkī where now you have 'Ilikai, Waikikian [hotels], there used to be a Japanese onsen and teahouse.

HA: Yeah. We call 'em Mochizuki Tea House.

MK: What do you remember about going to Waikīkī teahouses?

HA: Father and mother used to go there. The elder people. They used to have parties there. Mostly, it's parties. And then, they have furo. You know, Japanese like furo, eh, come back. Well, as days went on, we used to go there and have beer and things like that when we were about, oh, twenty-something, almost thirty, you know. We call it Mochizuki Tea House over there. Right by 'Ilikai place.

They used to have big place over there. And eat--mostly it's a restaurant, something like a restaurant. But they used to call 'em Mochizuki. And they have big bathtub. That's where the elder people used to go. In those days, well, the father. Mostly men used to go. Women didn't go there too much, anyway.

MK: Oh, so that was what it was, huh?

HA: Yeah. The name, Mochizuki Tea House.

MK: And then, when we were looking at your old photographs, we saw pictures of young girls dressed in kimono for dancing lessons.

HA: Yeah. Nihon buyō. We call that Nihon buyō. Nihon odori, you know. They had this sensu? You know, that, they open up?

MK: Fan?

HA: Fan, eh? Fan, and then, this. They had Japanese---the teacher used to come our place over there in the veranda, and teach the kids. Because the kids are only about seven, eight, nine [years old], you know. When they get big, they don't like to wear kimonos, you see.

MK: Who were some of the kids that came to your place?

HA: Oh, near from the place we used to stay. Not too far. Some come from--close to Kapahulu and close to McCully. And then, Kālia Road, those place. Kālia Road, they were quite a lot of Japanese over there, you know, years ago. And used to be a fishpond and rice patch. And we used to deliver. Kālia Road, actually, it's a rice patch over there and pigpen. Pigpen, because these Okinawa people used to raise. We used to deliver, that's why I know. They used to raise pigs, chicken. We used to deliver.

MK: The Kālia Road area used to be rice patches and pig farms?

HA: Yeah.

MK: About when was that?

HA: Oh, boy, I was little kid. I get hard time remember. I must be around eight, nine, ten [years old], somewhere around that. And then, further down, toward by Holiday Mart, we used to go there, buy vegetables, which I used to go with my dad. Vegetable, truck farming. More or less, truck farming. Not a big [farm], eh? We used to go down there, buy vegetables for the store. For the store, eh? Lettuce, cucumber, green onion, and daikon, and watercress. All that, we used to buy over there. Used to be by this Holiday Mart, toward Kalākaua side. Used to have this Chinese people, vegetable farm.

MK: How about the rice patches in Kālia? Who ran the rice patches . . .

HA: The Chinese. We even had a big rice patch right back here.

MK: Where?

HA: Right back here. You know where the Princess Ka'iulani and the old Royal Theater? The Food Pantry around there, now. Around there, they had rice patch and banana field. We used to go there. Always down there. And then, right around here, they had this hasu farm. Hasu, renkon? What do you call that? Hasu, renkon? With the pukas inside? Was nothing but a pond, raising that. The reason why I always remember that rice patch and banana field, because we used to go steal bananas every time. Lot of guys steal. We see the Chinese guy, we run. We take ripe banana. But nobody around, we used to go over there with about three, four kids. Take one bananas, and one or two. Was, you know, those short trees, not the tall one. Chinese bananas is short, you see. We walk about the place. Oh, one banana there, one banana here. If can, sometimes, take two, take off. Then, we used to go up that rice patch to catch dojo. Dojo means the little (mud eel, three inches long).

MK: The fish, huh?

HA: Little fish, you know. Because the rice patch, eh? And then, water running, eh? We'd catch for bait for go fishing. I used to love fishing, see. Oh, used to get big banana field, and rice patch, and hasu farm, you know.

MK: Would you remember the names of anybody who was actually farming?

HA: Chinese people, so I don't know. They're all dead and gone. They used to have house, three or four house, you know, in a . . . About before the [Ala Wai] Canal was built, though. I was little kid. I still remember that. We used to go up and we pass in the front there. They have dogs, ducks, chicken in the olden days. That thing have changed. After they made the canal, that's when everything changed. No more the banana fields, no more the rice patch, no more the house. All over here, filled. Even McCully was all nothing but ponds. Had kois, like that, the black koi, the little color koi. We try and catch that, but the pond is so big, you can't catch 'em.

MK: So, after the canal came in, they filled in all the swampy areas in Waikīkī?

HA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. All around. Then, since that, it's no more.

MK: How did you feel about that since they were changing the area that you used to play in?

HA: Well, got little lonesome, you know. Hard to find--even the rivers. You know, the rivers? I used to go over there, catch bait. No more the rivers, so we have to go further, further up, you know, to catch bait, you see. So, things have changed then. Then I was getting

bigger, so naturally, we go farther. We walk to places, you see.

MK: You showed me a picture where you had your boat offshore of Waikīkī. So, with that boat, where did you go fishing?

HA: Right in front. This is about a fourteen-footer. Go fishing. We used to catch, you know. Catch the pāpio. Not a big one. That was some time later. Because when my dad used to [go] fishing with me--I used to go with him, rather--there were lots of fish. Oh, nobody fishing around there. Then everybody started coming fish. Then the fish started to get less and less. They go farther out, farther out. So, naturally, we have to get a boat to go farther out, too.

MK: I think you mentioned to me before that your father used to go fishing off of Prince Kūhiō's pier?

HA: Yeah, from there.

MK: Where was that located?

HA: You know, for instance, you know the Hawaiian Regent [Hotel]. Right on the right, 'Ewa side, on the ocean side, that's where Prince Kūhiō's home was there. So, from there, he comes calling, or he goes halfway, he yell to my dad. My dad used to get net, always ready, net. He bring the net, goes there, he catch 'em, you see. And then, of course, he gives them some, and he takes some, too.

MK: What do you remember about Prince Kūhiō and the people that lived at Prince Kūhiō's place?

HA: I don't remember too much because I never associate with them too much. I don't remember too well because I was just a little (boy). I used to go over there near the pier, right alongside the house. Oh, this is the house, we go down there, looking for small fish with a net, you know, scoop net. We always go in front there, past Steiner's place. Ernest Steiner [OHP interviewee]. He was small boy like me, small. He used to be around there. He comes to our place, too. So, I know him quite well, too. He was a good fisherman, and he used to go out alone because he had a good boat. Like me, I didn't have a . . . Little junk. (Chuckles) He goes right outside his place, in front.

MK: You know, even with the [Ala Wai] Canal built, did you folks go over to the canal area and play, then? After the canal was built . . .

HA: Yeah, oh, yeah. All the kids go over there. No bridge around there. We just go over there, throw stones. Well, the first few years, no fish, because they dug the place, eh? No fish can (live). Then, some time later, the fish start to come up, when the place got little more water in, like that. First time, no more fish down there, you

see. But when they were digging, I used to go up there and pick shells. You know, they dig, eh? When the water used to come down, we used to stay over there afterwards. All kinds of shell, I got. And not only me, but lot of kids used to go around, find shell. It's nothing, but, you know, it's something--I don't know--when the kids, we have nothing to do at home, huh? So, we go around where they filling up the place. So, we were enjoying it. In fact, we enjoyed those days better than today because, today, oh, my. Too many kids, they got everything. Yeah, they have everything. In those days, we only was limited with certain stuff, that's all, see.

MK: And then, going in the other direction from your house, what did you folks do at Kapi'olani Park?

HA: Oh, that time, they had this people. I used to go there and sleep over there. There used to be a zoo. I can remember now clearly when you ask me those things. There was zoo over there. And then, Wise family used to stay. You heard that? Wise?

MK: Was it John Wise?

HA: Johnny Wise. The two brothers were good football players. Very good, football. I used to go over there. They had a house right near that zoo. Used to go there, and see the monkeys, see the things like that. And used to play with those boys. And go over there, bring home coconuts. They used to have lots of coconut trees, you know. Because I think I climbed. I used to climb because the coconut tree wasn't too high at that time, it was low. Today, the tree, the coconut tree is so high, can't climb. So many years back, you see. I used to go there quite often.

MK: Oh, so you were a playmate of the Wise brothers?

HA: Yeah, the brothers. Yeah, go over there quite often. The reason why I know them because they used to come to our store. Used to come to the store and buy gum, the suckers, you know? Little round suckers, they call 'em. They used to come out, and then I start to know them. Then, I started go up their place over there. They used to have, oh, about two, three dogs around. Big dogs. But they don't chase me because I go there and we friendly, eh? (Chuckles)

MK: Where exactly was their house, though?

HA: Oh, it's now, gee. From Kapahulu Road, little inside, where the zoo. Over there, had one house there. Had big house. And then, further down, they used to have a great big racetrack. One mile, what? I don't know. Racetrack. And they used to have polo there. Polo, you know. And when they had this racetrack, race--only horse race, like that--we used to go out there and see. Usually weekends, all around the side, everybody used to go out there, look at it.

MK: Was there gambling, those days?

- HA: No, no. Well, the elder people did, but I don't know. You see, we were kids. We don't remember, and we don't do those things, you know.
- MK: So, you used to watch them having the horse races?
- HA: Yeah.
- MK: How about the polo games?
- HA: Polo games. We used to go over there. Dillingham. They used to trade, eh? Erdman, Castle, and all those big shots. Many of them was trading with us, anyway. They stay in Diamond Head, Kāhala home. My dad used to deliver and delivery boy. Used to deliver the groceries, you know. The father, of course, all of them are dead and gone already. Walter Dillingham, and Harold Erdman, and Castle. And then, sometime later, the Castle, they moved Kāne'ohe side, huh? Before, they used to stay Diamond Head side. They still have a big home, Castle home, in Kane'ohe side, yeah? Near the mountain, eh?
- MK: And then, I know that there used to be a Makee Island on that side, Kapi'olani Park side of the zoo area . . .
- HA: Yeah. It's an island with date trees. They used to have. I used to go over there. And water right around. Water was coming from Mō'ili'iili or somewhere. I used to go catch bait, too, over there. Every place where there's water like that with little bait, eh, I used to go around. So, right in the center, right around, they had this. That's across Grand Hotel.
- MK: Oh, Pacific Grand?
- HA: No, no, no, no. Grand.
- MK: Waikīkī Grand?
- HA: Waikīkī Grand [Hotel], right across. The zoo is located now, eh? That's where they had the island over there. Right to Kalākaua Avenue. We used to go over there. And sometimes, we see some fish come in from outside there because the bridge, eh? Over the bridge, and kind of deep water. So, we go over there. Used to go. We look at it. "Oh, yeah, I think I better go get the net." I used to go borrow net. Mr. Ozaki used to stay where the [Waikīkī] Grand Hotel is today. I used to go borrow net and throw 'em. Of course, the water over there no deep, only about little above the knee.
- MK: Knee-deep.
- HA: Yeah, I used to borrow the net. I used to throw net, too. I used to go fishing alone, you know. Oh, quite a lot. I don't go far, but. . . . Don't go in deep places like that. As a kid, we're scared, eh? Get drowned.

- MK: Oh, so, there used to be a lot of good fishing, then, in Waikīkī?
- HA: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Lots of. Because the water comes down, the food comes down from the mountain, eh? And where the food comes down, the fish come up from the ocean looking for food, eh? Then, when they covered that--when they made the Ala Wai Canal and covered all the rivers, the fish migrated somewhere else. Because nothing--no food come down. Every place, they said, when there's river, the fishes come from somewhere.
- MK: I know that the Natatorium was built about 1927. What do you remember about the Natatorium?
- HA: Oh, that's something big to us, boy. Gee, we go swimming over there. We go swimming. We used to go there swimming, too. And then, they had swimmers from Japan. I got some pictures which I took. Fifty years ago, I think, the swimmers from Japan, and from Europe, and States or somewhere. They used to have a swimming meet over there. Yeah, and then, later on, we went to same school, Buster Crabbe. His brother was Eddie--Edward. We called him "Ed" Crabbe. And his brother is Buster Crabbe, eh? And then, Johnny Weissmuller. He acted as Tarzan. I don't know if you remember that, it's long time ago, eh? Johnny Weissmuller swam there. When they were training, it's wide open. But when it's meeting, we cannot go in. You know, when swimming meet, cannot go in. But when they're training when it's open, I used to go in there and swim. But, tsk, I'm short, and those guys are going like this. Me, I'm way behind. Just like this. So, I know when Johnny Weissmuller used to swim over there, and Buster Crabbe, and the famous Japanese swimmers. Japanese swimmers are good, too, you know. Oh, yeah, they were good swimmers. Go over there, and then, "Oh, the swimming pool coming up." Oh, boy. Every time, we used to go, walk over. We kids, so we walk over.
- MK: Oh, so it was big thing for your folks, then?
- HA: Oh, yeah. Those days, no car, eh? We can't drive car. We walk, see.
- MK: I know that, earlier, we were talking about the fairgrounds that came up, you know, where now they have the Ala Wai Golf Course. What used to happen at the fairgrounds that you remember?
- HA: Just like any other. Ferris wheel, merry-go-round. And then, you know, where you have to, ten cents? You throw the ball, try and get some present. And main thing, we go over there with ten cents, we buy ice cream. Five cents, ice cream, and sometimes we buy some kind of stuff, you know. I don't remember what I bought, but ten cents was big money to us. You can buy anything, ten cents. Five cents here, five cents there. That's all I got. They wouldn't give us fifty cents, no, no, no. Fifty cents, you be multi-millionaire. Yeah, in those days, you know. Yeah, we used to go there. But when there's a fair, we can't go every day because the charge was twenty-five cents to go in. That's a big money to go in, twenty-five cents.

That's big money. So, we go there only. . . . I think when they had it, they used to have a week or ten days, you know. And within that time, we go in there twice, that's all. So, we can't go every day.

MK: And then, you were talking about the circus earlier, coming to Kapi'olani Park and. . . .

HA: Yeah. Circus. Oh, they used to have animal show. Oh, boy, I used to like that. The lions, the elephants. Those days, they used to bring those animals with boat, yeah? Of course, still, they do, because too big, eh? I used to like that. So, when they says, "Oh, we going to have a big circus," oh, we go crazy. But same thing. . . .

MK: How often did you folks have circus in town?

HA: Not every time. I think once a year or once in two years, or something like that. Very seldom, I know. That's why, we're very--- big thing, to us. That's the olden days, anyway.

MK: Those were special times, yeah?

HA: Oh, yeah. Special treat, too, eh? We can't get fifty cents, you know. We only get twenty-five cents, fifteen cents. Yeah. Those days, twenty-five cents went a long ways, you know. Today, even a dollar, there's nothing to buy, almost, one dollar.

MK: (Chuckles) True. You know, I know, like in the Japanese community, certain holidays are important, yeah? Like Boys' Day and. . . .

HA: Yeah, Tenchōsetsu.

MK: . . . and Tenchōsetsu.

HA: Yeah. That's Emperor's Day.

MK: How about in Waikīkī? How were those Japanese holidays celebrated?

HA: My mama used to not exactly celebrate, but she used to tell us, oh, today, "Kyo wa Tenchōsetsu. (Today is the Emperor's Birthday.)" And she used to make sushi--inari sushi and maki sushi, like that. Oh, I used to like that. That's a big treat for us, too. Long time ago, by golly. Meat, you know, what? We used to eat just once a week, once in ten days, when he had the first store or before the first store. Meat was a big treat for us. You know, once a week or once in ten days, you know. The rest, we used to eat fish. That's why, these nisei, lot of them, is short like me. Of course, some of them is tall and big, but majority is small because we never had too much protein, you know, in those days. Cannot afford to buy meat when it cost, I think, about thirty cents a pound. Twenty-five or thirty cents a pound is too expensive. Once in ten days, well, you know.

MK: Gee, those days were hard, then, yeah? Getting meat.

HA: Yeah. There's plenty meat. Rich people used to eat meat every day. But not like us. We couldn't eat, my sister and I. And one more, three of us. Then, five. My mother. Four or five in the family, cannot afford to eat meat. One pound not enough. (Laughs)

MK: How about like O-shōgatsu, though?

HA: Oh, yeah, O-shōgatsu, we celebrate. We used to go house to house. Right next door, we go in. "Akemashite omedetō gozaimasu. (Happy New Year)." In those days, every time, Shōgatsu, like that and Christmas, we used to bring present, eh? We used to bring present for the schoolteachers. Not a big thing. Our mother used to give us a little candy which she bought, ten cents or fifteen cents. Lot of kids used to bring, too. I used to bring, too. And friends, we used to---friends, we never give too much because cost too much. Sell chocolate, ten cents, we buy. Because you can buy about two for five cents, like that, but we not that rich, you know. (Chuckles) You know, Christmas was a big affair. And New Year. New Year, well, we make lot of the Japanese kaukau, yeah? Then, every place closed, and then we put this bamboo stuff. The stores closed. The next-door laundry closed. You put that. Not like today.

MK: Oh, now days, you have to stay open, yeah?

HA: Yeah. Before, Shōgatsu, we closed. But other days, we didn't close, though. You know, Washington's Birthday or whatnot, we never close.

MK: How about Boys' Day? How was that celebrated in the neighborhood?

HA: Well, not too much. Because some people were celebrating when they had a first child, boy.

MK: How about the koi-nobori?

HA: Koi-nobori, that's Boys' Day.

MK: Yeah, did . . .

HA: Oh, all around, you see the koi . . .

MK: . . . the families put up koi?

HA: Yeah. Oh, yeah, quite a lot, you know, koi. They used to have. Oh, some, about three, four, five, you know. If can afford to buy five, okay, you put five. If can't afford to buy five, you put two or one, whatever it is. What you can afford, you know. Boys' Day, ne? But us kids, oh, we look 'em, and say, "Gee, over there must be rich. Look, look, they get four, five koi up over there." You can tell by the . . . Yeah, because great things, you know, at the time, koi. Koi-nobori, no? But when wahines, they used to have different, nō? Not much, yeah?

- MK: How about Girls' Day for your sisters?
- HA: Sisters? Oh, not much, you know, those days. You don't put up anything. Don't put up. Only Boys' Day, you put up the koi, yeah?
- MK: So, you remembered that kind of celebration or special days in Waikīkī, yeah?
- HA: Yeah. Because we didn't have too much things to do, so naturally, we have to make the best of it and enjoy it. At home, we don't have no omocha, nothing. You have to go out, but can't go out too far. Or roaming around the beach. And surfboard like that, I used to play surfboard in the river.
- MK: Oh, the stream that ran from the back of your house out into the ocean?
- HA: Yeah. Because the river wide, eh? You can get that surfboard in. It's right alongside the house, anyway, right behind. Just bring 'em out.
- MK: Oh, so, you used to get on the surfboard and paddle out on the stream into the ocean?
- HA: Yeah. Go under the bridge. And then after we got a little bit more big, we're about twelve, thirteen, fourteen [years old], I think, then we walk. We carry 'em, we walk across the the street and leave the board down across the street. Across, on the beach. Nobody take. Leave 'em on the beach for one day, two days, three days. No, no problem.
- MK: Now days kind of hard to do that.
- HA: Oh, anything you leave down the beach gone in five minutes. One minute, it's gone. Yeah, that's right.
- MK: You know, when you weren't playing, where did you go for your schooling?
- HA: School? Right behind, Waikīkī [Elementary] School. Just about how many blocks? Three blocks, we used to be that close, you know. Four blocks away. That's all we go.
- MK: What did Waikīkī [Elementary] School look like when you first started going there?
- HA: Oh, when the first time, we're only little kids, so I don't know. Hard to remember, yeah? We used to go in that kind of building--one building, over there. And they used to have first-grade, second-grade, third-grade building, those days. Then they got the long one, and they plant the green stuff right around. The first one was only the cottage, one cottage, you see.
- MK: You know that Waikīkī Japanese[-language] School, where was that?

HA: Oh, if you tell me that, it's right across Akaka's. That's Lemon Road and one block, you know. Right across, 'Ewa side of that. One hotel now over there, eh?

MK: Oh, okay. Across from the Akaka's?

HA: Yeah. The Asuka camp was down below, and the Japanese[-language] School was next door up, toward the mountain. With fence. Because it was long bungalow just like. And then, we used to have one class. Then, finish, the next class comes in. We have to have one, two, three. I think three rooms, I think.

MK: And then, what kind of things did you do at that Japanese[-language] School?

HA: Oh, they show us katakana. And then, they tell us stories. Kept us quite interested, you know. One hour.

MK: One hour every day?

HA: Yeah. After the Haole school pau, we go over there, one hour.

MK: How was the teacher?

HA: Husband and wife. Husband and wife was teaching us. And their house was right in that schoolgrounds, too. After school, they used to make us mop the floors, sweep the place, clean the boards. Those days, we used to do housecleaning, too, after school. Yeah, get the mop and everything, which was good. Trained us, you know. Then, after that, then we went to Hongwanji [Japanese-language School]. Of course, things have changed when you go to Hongwanji, eh? Over there.

MK: What changed when you went to Hongwanji?

HA: Well, we got bigger. We got little older. That's why, we're able to catch streetcar. Before that, we don't even ride streetcar, yet. Yeah, we scared, eh?

MK: Going back to the subject of the Waikīkī [Elementary] School, what teachers do you remember from Waikīkī School?

HA: Oh, I think, Mrs. King, she was the principal. And then, Mrs. Winnie. You know, this Haole schoolteacher. Mrs. King was Hawaiian-Haole, I think. And then, Mrs. Kaeo. She's dead and gone, too, I think. And then, Mrs. Kakanui, I think, Hawaiian-something. Oh, we had several, no? And then, we had man teacher. I forgot. And Miss Born. B-O-R-N, Miss Born. Haole teacher. And I never forget, Miss Winnie gave me, yardstick. Black and blue, I came home, and got more worse, too. Yeah, hit over here and hit over here. She hit hard, you know, yardstick.

MK: What did you do to get hit?

- HA: We line up before we going to school, and I happen to go late in the line. (Chuckles) Man, we were scared, you know, that time, those days. I think I was about six, seven [years old], no? Seven, eight. Yeah, go home, you get more. Today, you can't lay the hands on kids, no? That's no good. Kids, you have to lay the hands on, make 'em to behave. Oh, boy, I cannot remember all the teachers' names, but only three or four.
- MK: What did you like most about your days at Waikīkī [Elementary] School?
- HA: Oh, we didn't like school, anyway. Too much study and too much. . . . It was enjoyable, we go over there play baseball, football, and being there with the friends, eh? So, wasn't too bad. Well, actually, all kids say, "Oh, big holiday today." We so darn happy, holiday. Just like this week. All the kids are happy because they're having spring vacation now, you see. Like that. In the schoolgrounds, we used to play. The schoolgrounds, in the front, it's big, and the bungalows like that.
- MK: And then, after you went to Waikīkī, where did you go? After you went to Waikīkī [Elementary] School?
- HA: Oh, then to Punahou [School], I think.
- MK: How did you get into Punahou?
- HA: Oh, we had one Haole customer. She had to pull string. He or she had to pull string because in those days, they didn't want, you know, unless you pulled string like that. And it was cheap, too. One year it was. . . . I don't remember. One year was only few dollars. Yeah, few dollars. Today, thousands. I think, today, for a whole year is about \$4,000? Something like that.
- MK: How come your father wanted you to go Punahou?
- HA: These Haole people. We used to have nothing but Haole customers. Mostly all Haole customers. They said, "You better send your boys to Punahou because that's the best school in Hawai'i."
- That's why my dad said, I think he said, "I no more money." But only one person, they was going struggle and send me, eh? In those days, even a dollar is a big money, you know. They don't make much, you know. But of course, at the time, we doing business, anyway. So, they struggled and they put through school.
- MK: How many other Japanese were there at Punahou when you went?
- HA: Well, at first, nobody. None. Then, gradually, Dr. Nishijima, and Woodrow Katsunuma, and then the guys that came in, was early, the Suyeki Okumura. That's all I know. So we had to play with Haoles.
- MK: How did you feel about going to Punahou?

HA: Oh, well, you know, I didn't feel because all my friends was Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, all Waikīkī side. You don't see too much Haoles. When you go over there, all Haole. The kids used to hate me. They say, "Hey, you go Haolefied school, Haolefied school," you know. Because lot of these kids, they can't go. Cost too much money. "Haolefied." That's why, (chuckles) I didn't like it, but, you know, I had no choice.

MK: Who were some of the Waikīkī people that went to Punahou? Anybody?

HA: Oh, yeah. I remember the Castle children, Dillingham, Erdman, and I forgot the name, but anyway. All those Kāhala and Diamond Head rich people's kids, they go up there, you know. But they're all rich people, so I cannot associate. When they were small, their father and mother used to have drivers. They used to go to school with chauffeur. Pick the kids up. Me, no more chauffeur.

MK: How did you go?

HA: Streetcar. No more bus, those days. Streetcar. But sometimes, coming home, since they going Waikīkī, I get on there, and drop me, Waikīkī, by the store.

MK: Coming from a poorer family, could you afford to participate in the extra activities at Punahou?

HA: No, I couldn't. That's why, I couldn't. When we got to high school, then they say, well, let's go to their house in Kailua, Kane'ohe, 'Ewa. Oh, they have this beach home. Used to go. So, sometimes I used to go, get to join them, and sleep overnight. About twenty kids, thirty kids. Sleep on floor, anywhere. Down the beach, so we don't care. Sleep on the floor, anywhere. Sometimes. Not every time, though. And then, gradually, they start to get cars. I cannot afford to get car. So, you know, you cannot compete with those rich people like that. Because they go to school every day, you see the drivers, eh? They used to wear caps sometimes in those days. Yeah, bring the kids out. Not us. Can't afford to get drivers go out there.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: When you were going to Punahou, how about the studies there? How did you do in terms of studies?

HA: Oh, I used to get good grades, especially geography and algebra. Because I used to like geography. Oh, very interested in geography because I said, "I'm going to travel someday, someday." So, I used to like geography. I used to have a geography teacher. She was from the Mainland. And algebra teacher, she was a Haole, anyway.

Young, Haole lady. But now, algebra, gee, I completely forgot already. (Chuckles) Was good, because then I made the around-the-world trip with my sister. So, it was all right. They tell about Greece. I used to say, "Oh, Greece, what kind?" Parthenon, you know, like that. I say, "Oh, gee, what kind is that? I like." And Paris, when they say, Notre Dame. "Oh, boy, how wonderful. Must be wonderful." And then, when she say Rome, gee, Pompeii, Rome, gee. Curiosity.

MK: So, you liked your geography for your traveling.

HA: Oh, yeah. But then, see, "Oh, this is Pompeii. What kind?" All broken down stone, and this and that. They had a bread factory. This is the road here, and they had a water pipe this way. Oh, okay. The first time I went to Pompeii was around the world with my sister. That's where we met the boy scouts. Jamboree, they had in Hungary. So, with this group, we went together. And we all talked Japanese, no English. My sister was reading all Japanese. "Oh, this, kore, kore, nani? (What is this?)"

MK: Oh, so you kept up your Japanese, too, then . . .

HA: Yeah. Since then, yeah.

MK: . . . all through the years, yeah? Hongwanji and. . . .

HA: Yeah. It's interesting. That's why I can, I'm able to talk not fluently but fair. Enough to make the other person hear, understand. But I cannot understand when they talk this technical words. Technical words, especially doctors. Even though they have these big word, Japanese, gee, I don't know. I will understand simple Japanese. But I cannot read or write Japanese. That's the sad part of it. I can speak, but I cannot read or write.

MK: That's hard, yeah? I was wondering, what year did you graduate from Punahou?

HA: Was it '31 or '32? Somewhere around there, I think.

MK: When you graduated, what were you hoping to do with your life, you know, in terms of a career . . .

HA: I just had to follow my father's footsteps. Because he had a store way down the corner, that's the one I have to carry on. Nobody else to carry on. But before that, I didn't like store, you know. Too long hours. So, when summertime especially, with my friends, we used to go to stevedore. And I had friends come from Seattle, California. They come down here, no money, eh? They come by boat, no plane. And then, we all. . . . There was a big house down Mō'ilili. Kumalae. Kumalae is just like a castle house. When the boys came from Mainland, they used to stay with them in the big house. Right where this [Hawaiian] Host candies factory? Hawaiian Host? Yeah, right in that area there had one house.

MK: And they would come stay at that house?

HA: Yeah. Then, we used to go stevedore--the summertime work. Then, after that, I used to think, well, stevedore too tough, eh? Loading sugar, pineapple. Pushing the case goods, you know. Carry, I cannot carry. Sugar, they have a roller at the time. Today, no more that kind. All high lifts and things. All mechanized, you see. In those days, all manual, eh? Sugar, oh, was tiresome job. We used to get, oh, big pay. Sixteen cents an hour. Sixteen cents an hour, that's a big pay. (Chuckles)

MK: So, your goal was to follow in your father's business?

HA: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

MK: What made you feel that, though? What made you feel that you should follow in your father's business instead of doing something else?

HA: There were lots of things, easier things to do, like a doctor, or things like that, lawyers and attorney, but that's too much work for me. I didn't like. Too much studying. Ah, no choice I had. The store, well, at least I can make my living, eh? So, my dad said, "You must take over eventually someday. Someday, you have to take over. Who's going to take it? No more, well, you're going to sell 'em. Get rid of the store."

Then, I said, "Gee whiz, if that's the case, not so good, eh?" So, I said, "Okay, I'll take over." Which we were forced to take over. But my mother was the key lady, eh? Key man. She controlled everything, you know. Well, as far as working, make us work. And my sister, and me. My brothers young, so they don't work yet.

MK: So when you started working for the store, what did you do at the store?

HA: Oh, help deliver boy. Go with the car and help deliver, deliver. You know, can't do too bad because I don't know about it. When you deliver things, well, you carry this, you carry that. Okay, we just go in the kitchen, leave 'em, pau, come out. Then, gradually, I start to do the buying, finally. Of course, we had a manager there. He was there for about eighteen, twenty years, so he knew more than me. So, we couldn't tell him to quit and I take over. But meantime, I was more or less gradually controlling the place. The second store, yeah? Then, now, look. I'm so old now, I can't even work too much.

MK: (Chuckles) So, you got more and more into the management of the store as the years went by, yeah?

HA: Yeah.

MK: I know that you've been married. I was wondering, when did you get married?

- HA: Nineteen forty. . . . Wait, before the war. Just before the war. The war started '41, eh? Yeah?
- MK: Yeah.
- HA: Before that, so two years before. One year or two years. But 1939 or 1940, or something like that. And got divorced after the war. After the war, I think. Can't keep track of. . . .
- MK: How about children?
- HA: One.
- MK: You have one child?
- HA: Yeah.
- MK: When the child was growing up, where was the child raised?
- HA: Mother's place--McCully.
- MK: McCully. So not in Waikīkī, then.
- HA: No. I was on this side, myself.
- MK: When you look back, you've lived Waikīkī long time, worked, and had a store in Waikīkī. What's the biggest changes you seen in Waikīkī?
- HA: Oh, the big change is, well, skyscrapers. Concrete buildings start to come up. The land value come up. And then, more stores coming up. And more people start to come in. See, before, Kalākaua Avenue, you can walk all day, you only see two or three people. Yeah, all day. And automobile, you see one or two. Because I used to walk from near Kapi'olani Park to by Moana Hotel. Of course, that's where I was born, so I used to come in. There's not a car in sight in those days. And then, once in a while, you see one car. I don't know whose car. Somebody's car going there, going back and forth. That's why, my sister, only few cars like that, she got run over by a car, you know. The one that died, you see. She got hit by a car. But in those days, you don't know where the car coming, because there's no car. You feel as though there's no car, so you cross the street. And happened that, unlucky, she just happened, run into somebody's car. So, the last time, she was in the hospital for six months. Six, seven months, I think. Her leg was completely broken, but healed good. She wasn't bowlegged or nothing. It came out good. But she died at the age of fifty-three only. Those days, you don't see no cars, and gradually, car come more and more. People.

Then, the thing had changed was when this place became a state, no? Before that, was better. Since it became a state, more funny people started coming here. All this Haole, young, funny people and dangerous people started coming here, you see. Oh, before that, we didn't

have problems. Of course, when we was a territory, Territory of Hawai'i, they could stop. Not let any more come in, yeah? Now, it's a state, so you cannot stop anybody coming from the state from anywhere. That's why, it's gotten to be, Hawai'i--not Hawai'i, well, anyplace--the most dangerous place is Waikīkī today. Waikīkī is the most dangerous place in whole Hawai'i, I think. Of course, other places just as bad, but not as bad as Waikīkī.

MK: You were saying that this store doesn't open till late at night . . .

HA: Yeah. Ten [o'clock p.m.].

MK: Because . . .

HA: It was dangerous thing. We had three holdups already. Three holdups, no? Just about a week ago, next door, Hata's got holdup. In the morning--8:30 in the morning. With gun, you know. He must be a professional thief because he knows the high-priced cameras and lenses. I was right out there and was wondering, gee, one, two, three cops come in here. I thought, why they coming here, this part of the morning, 8:30 in the morning.

Then, the boy said, "We had a burglar."

"When? I was right over there, I didn't see anything." It's like that, now, you know. Oh, boy, Waikīkī is getting to be really dangerous today.

MK: It's getting to be dangerous.

HA: That's why, especially at nights, you know. Lot of these Japanese people tell me that got their purse snatched. Take 'em out and purse snatching, yeah? And then, this Japanese people, they think it's Japan, that's why they leave the doors open. And come in, "Gimme money, money. O-kane." They know how to talk Japanese now, lot of the Haoles, or Hawaiians, Portuguese. They know how to talk Japanese. "O-kane chōdai. O-kane gimme." You see? Yeah, when they show 'em the pistol, well, naturally, they going to have to give, eh? I hear those cases. The tour director tells me. He says, "Oh, these Japanese old ladies. We tell them be sure to close the door, keep 'em tight, don't open when there's a knock. Don't open." They leave the door like this, open. And then, two or three ladies yakkety-yak in there. They come in there. They get all ripped.

MK: So, they're not used to it, yeah?

HA: Yeah, from Japan, see? Oh, Waikīkī, really getting to be rough, rough. We call it the "Small Chicago." "Small Chicago," eh? Not the big Chicago, but small. Or small big Chicago, something like that. (Chuckles)

MK: So, that's what you think is the biggest change you've noticed?

HA: Yeah, the buildings coming up, and then the land. Oh, the land went up about, oh, fifty times, sixty times. More, maybe, some place. I remember, those days, when they said, "Buy here, buy that." The Steiners and the Waikīkī people. "You better buy." Twenty-five cents a square foot. Any part of Kalākaua [Avenue], twenty-five cents a square foot. Anywhere. Today, you pay \$100 a square foot. That's why, that thing, oh, boy, I say, "Gee, if my dad was little more smart, little more brains." Even you had brains, no money, what can you do? Even if you had brains, all the brains in the world, but if no money, can't do nothing. But the Chinese got rich, though. And all those people. Right after the war, I know, they used to come our store. They said, "Hey, Aoki, buy my place. Only \$2,000. Only \$3,000." Where is that \$2,000, \$3,000? You can't find that. See? And that place, even \$2,000, \$3,000, if you bought at the time, worth \$100,000, \$200,000, half a million today. Here right by the hotel, eh? But who knows? We were scared to death, anyway. Yeah, but my dad was fortunate. We were fortunate, but no money. Cannot buy nowhere.

MK: Was all timing, yeah?

HA: Yeah.

MK: If you had the money and the price was good, good to buy, but no money.

HA: No money. Can't do nothing. Even though he got all the brains in the world, but he can't move, eh?

MK: I think I'll end the interview here, okay? Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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