

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Eileen Tam

*"(When) the kids couldn't afford [school supplies], many of the teachers just bought and gave them to the (children). Today, when I hear about, oh, request for this and request for that, I say, 'They don't know what (chuckles) teaching was like a long time [ago].' Supplies were really lacking in those days, and if we had them, it (was) very minimal."*

Eileen Tam was born in Punalu'u, O'ahu in 1909 or 1910. She attended 'Aiea School, Waipahu School, and McKinley High School. After graduating from McKinley in 1928, she entered Territorial Normal and Training School and was teaching in Ha'ikū, Maui two years later.

Except for one year as an exchange teacher in Wyckoff, New Jersey, Tam spent her entire career teaching on Maui. After Ha'ikū School, she taught at Makawao School, Pā'ia School, and 'Īao School. Tam spent the final ten years of her teaching career as a traveling librarian on Maui. She retired in 1973.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Eileen Tam (ET)

March 7, 1991

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is an interview with Eileen Tam, conducted March 7, 1991, in her Honolulu home. The interviewer is Joe Rossi.

Mrs. Tam, to begin with, could you tell me a little bit about your family, where they're from originally?

ET: Are you referring to my grandparents or do you mean my. . . . Perhaps I should start with my grandparents.

JR: Sure, that would be fine.

ET: My grandparents came from (Sai Chin Village, Guangdong Province), China. [My grandfather] had heard about the riches that could be found on the California coast—the California Gold Rush. Somehow he decided that he would leave his home and go to America (to) make his fortune. But when he arrived there, he found that it was long past the time [of the gold rush]. And so he worked in the restaurants (in San Francisco), he worked doing laundry, (and) he worked wherever he could (earn a few bucks).

Finally (he) decided that was not the life he would put his family through, and he came to Hawai'i. At that time there was already a group of Chinese people doing farming in Hawai'i. That group was located in Punalu'u, way over across the Pali, beautiful Punalu'u. He already had a family in China. The Chinese and Japanese people are very diligent people. They work very hard, and their objective is to make enough money, (then) return to their own homeland. But in this case, (my grandfather) earned enough money and brought his family here.

Chinese, as you know, believe in sons, not in daughters. Unfortunately for him, he had six daughters and only one son. When he came to Hawai'i, he left his first (and second) daughters in China, if I remember correctly. Yes, that's correct. He [later] brought these two to Hawai'i, (to) Punalu'u, and both of them had bound feet. You know the story about bound feet. The emperor thought that women [with bound feet] looked prettier, and it was easier to get husbands if you have teeny-weeny feet. When my mother was born—she was born in (Kahana—my grandparents) bound her feet. (She didn't complain) too often, (but she told us) how painful it was. And there were times when she ran down to the beach, removed all the

bandages. As soon as she went home, (her) parents would bind her feet again. It's a cruel, cruel custom. It (is) too bad that they didn't try it on the emperor. You're deformed, really, for life.

JR: Do you know whether many Chinese families did that after they had moved?

ET: Quite a number, quite a number—the generation that I'm speaking of, yes.

JR: Oh, I see.

ET: My mother was the third daughter. (They also bound my fourth aunt's feet.) But my fifth and sixth aunts were lucky, they didn't suffer like that. (Often) I wonder how these women managed. It's so difficult with these tiny, little feet, doing all the housework (and) doing the farm work also. Life wasn't easy for them.

Well, that's the story of my (grandparents). My father was a graduate from the [Chinese] naval academy. At that time, the Empress Dowager was a believer in spending money on herself, on palaces, and for the good of the rich. She didn't believe in building a navy. But she did build a marble boat.

JR: Yeah, I've seen pictures of that.

ET: I've been on it.

JR: Oh, you have.

ET: Yes, when I went to China (for a) visit. We were in Beijing, (formerly called Peking, and) there was that marble boat that she (had) built. Today it's a tourist attraction. You've seen pictures, (and) I've been on it.

When my father came here, he was not really trained for anything. To (become) a farmer (was) impossible, (but he tried) because he was with his relatives and friends in Punalu'u (and) they (were) farmers. (He failed), so he decided to try his hand at businesses. Unfortunately, his businesses did not succeed because the people he worked with weren't too honest. I recall this incident that my mother told me. At that time, we were living in 'Aiea. I was born in Punalu'u, and that's the reason why I've been so active in that [Punalu'u] roots society, Yin Sit Sha. (It) is now very active as a group to get the Punalu'u people together. Ever since that movie *Roots* (was produced), everyone became (very) conscious about their genealogy and their backgrounds. Well, where was I when I deviated? He tried his hand at businesses. My mother told a story (about her inability) to read and write.

JR: Your mother?

ET: She only went to the second grade. My father's partner asked her to put her cross—in those days, if you put a cross, that's your signature. (She had signed) over the business to him, that partner. So my dad lost that (store).

Well, after a number of disappointments, he decided that staying here was not the thing for

him to do. Never mind about his family, he's going back to China, where he was very comfortable. He had some very comfortable relatives. I was going to say rich. But they were very comfortable in China, where he could just have a very wonderful life. If you know anything about the background of China, you do know that if you have some money, you have the servants, the amahs and everything to do your work. You just sit around and smoke opium, (chuckles) and do things like that.

Well anyway, he returned to China, and he left us to—well, get along as best as we could. Fortunately, my brother, who's the oldest in the family, worked very hard. And I must say that when you're in America, you have a lot of chances, advantages, if you're willing to move on ahead. (My brother) worked. He went to the University [of Hawai'i]. But he was helped by a few very wonderful Christians. Many of the people don't realize how good some of the missionaries were. They helped many of the families. Children who needed education, they helped them. But they never broadcasted it or advertised it. My brother got help from—I can't remember his name. Anyway, he was a missionary belonging to the church. So my brother worked, went to school. He graduated from the university. We all worked. Right after school we would take on some kind of job and helped one another. And my mother held the purse strings. She ran the house.

JR: Now, your mother was a single parent at that point.

ET: (Correct.) Unfortunately, I had a brother who was very ill with kidney trouble, and that was one of her big worries. Well, he didn't make it.

JR: And how many children were there?

ET: Two sons and four girls—six. (Chuckles)

JR: And whereabouts do you fit in?

ET: I'm number four.

JR: And what year were you born?

ET: [It was] 1909 or 1910. Now, here's an interesting thing. I don't know the correct date, because when we were born in the country, there was not—perhaps there was a requirement, but my father never registered us. When (we) graduated from the Territorial Normal [and Training] School, we were asked to present our birth certificates. To accept a position with the Department of [Public Instruction], (one must have a birth certificate). I got my birth certificate (then). And I don't think I'm unusual, I think there were others. My other two sisters were registered because they were born in 'Aiea. (With) the other four, we just made guesses at (the dates). So my birth certificate says June 15, 1909. And I know it's not June 15. We just chose the middle of the sixth month of the year (and) the fifteenth day of the sixth month. I don't know why 1909 (was selected). At that time, my mother was living (and) my aunt was living, and (they were my witnesses).

JR: Oh, I see.

ET: You know what the Chinese date means. As soon as you're born, you're a year old. That's the Chinese way of. . . . You've heard of that.

JR: So when you were children, did you celebrate birthdays, then, if you didn't know what day your birthday was?

ET: Very seldom did we celebrate birthdays. Perhaps in other homes they did, but not in my home. It was difficult. There were many times (when) there was no food on the table. So birthday's a luxury.

JR: How did your mom manage?

ET: (She) worked (hard, and her sisters were generous and assisted in many ways). We were farmed out. I remember (that) when I was only ten or twelve years old, I lived with my (fourth) aunt for a whole year in Waipahu. She owned a store. She had lost her husband, and she needed help in the store. I (got) up early in the mornings in those days. If you know, stores did not have (large) doors. They were all by boards, pieces of board. I still remember that. I'd get up early in the morning, take those pieces of board out (one by one), push all the showcases out, sprinkle the floor with water and then sweep the floor, get everything shipshape, then went on to school. Well, I lived with my aunt for a year. (One of my) brothers lived with another aunt for a while. (We earned) our keeps. At least we didn't go hungry. My mother's sisters were very generous. They helped whenever they could.

Then as soon as we were able to go out to work (we did). I worked in the [pineapple] cannery. You have to be at a certain age before you could apply for a job. Well, I lied, and I worked for a while. But I can never forget that Mr. Levy, he eyed me, and I used to be so scared when he came by me. They found out that I was underage, and they threw me out. But I went on to Libby's, and somehow the people didn't catch on there, because I took the night shift. The night shift is when you work after 6:00 (in the evening throughout the) night (until about 5:00 in the morning). At that time I stayed with my (first) aunt out in Kalihi. You know, Libby's cannery used to be out in Kalihi.

Well, those are my experiences. You ask me what I've done. I've done ever so many kinds of work. I worked for families. I'll never forget this lady—I won't mention the name. She lived up (in) Mānoa. I prepared vegetables and helped with the cooking as soon as I came home from school, and did all the dishes and so forth. One thing she made me do, which I (chuckles) can always remember, is get on my knees, with a pan of water, and scrub the floor. She was that meticulous. But I learned a lot from her. There were two—no, she had three children. I lived downstairs, and I was terrified (often. Somehow these children always got thirsty when their parents were out for the evening. They asked for glasses of water. I had to go out in the dark to get upstairs!)

JR: How old do you think you were?

ET: Twelve. Twelve (or) fourteen years old. But they were willing to take me (in, and I was happy) to work.

JR: And you were able to continue going to school and . . .

ET: (Yes), that's it. We were determined that we were going to get an education. My brother, he worked (and) helped us (when he went to school). When he (graduated, he continued to help) the family. That's true of many Oriental families. The oldest helps, then the next one continues to help, and so forth, until everyone has finished and gotten something, some kind of living, a degree or something to make a reasonable earning, to make a livelihood, not going to do menial work. (With) Asiatic people, Japanese and Chinese, you find that the parents generally send them to professional schools, after a lot of sacrifices.

Well, that's the way we existed. So I would say a lot of credit goes to the relatives who helped and our determination that we were not going to do scrubbing floors and things like that all our lives. We were out to get a good education, and that's why I went on to the Territorial Normal [and Training] School. At that time, after high school, only two years of the Territorial Normal School (were required to qualify a person to) get a teaching position. To become a teacher was the objective of many of the females in those days, because that's what girls should be doing. If you don't get married, the kind of work you want to do is teaching or clerical. But I went after education. And I was lucky. Nineteen-thirty, when I graduated (from the) normal school was, as I noted, Depression time. There were only a few people who were placed, out of my graduating class, and I was one of those. That's when I got my birth certificate. So, how old am I? I (can) gauge by (my sister's age). My sister is a year or two older than I, and she says she's this-and-that. But who cares how old you are.

After I got my normal school degree, I (was) placed on Maui. I did thirty-six years of teaching on Maui and (also) married a Maui boy, George. That's why I'm Eileen Tam. I was Eileen Chun. When I retired in 1973, I decided that it was time to come back to O'ahu, to be with my family. (From) '73 to '91, that's almost eighteen years. I've been retired eighteen years.

I've been talking, you should ask me questions.

JR: (Laughs) Well, I was wondering what it was like living in Punalu'u as a youngster.

ET: I have very little recollection of it, excepting that I do recall going out to catch 'o'opus (with my brother. Do you) know what 'o'opus are? Oh, that's delicious (when) you fry them. Running along the beaches (was fun).

JR: How did you catch them?

ET: Hook and line. You get those earthworm. My brother had to put the worms on (the line) for me. (Chuckles)

JR: You didn't want to do that.

ET: (No.) My recollections are very, very poor of Punalu'u.

JR: What kind of a home did you folks have?

ET: Oh my goodness, it's a shack really, really. I showed you the copy of *The Early Chinese in Punalu'u*. You've seen a picture of it. Later I'll get (the book) and show (it to) you. Nothing

much.

JR: But it was like a shack.

ET: Oh yes, generally it's like a shack. It is really a shack. And you work very hard, at least my mother did. She raised chickens besides raising children.

(Laughter)

ET: As I said, I have more vivid recollections of going out to work for different people. I remember this very kind couple who gave me a—she understood what the situation was. There (are) some very kind people in this world. After school, all I had to do was to go up to their apartment, right Downtown, and peel some vegetables for her. She would do the cooking. After that, I did the dishes. She fed me well, and that was all I had to do.

JR: How did you get to these different places, if you were living in Punalu'u?

ET: I left Punalu'u when I was a child. We moved to Honolulu, and then my dad moved on to 'Aiea. Now, when I say working out here, I already was living in Honolulu. And my mother was able to move in with her sister—I still know the place—down on Kukui Street. It's a tenement. One room, one little. . . . (Do) you know what these tenements are? They have six units in one big building. We moved in with my aunt. And later my aunt moved away, and we stayed. The rental was very, very low in those days. We all got into there, you know, just like (the way) the Filipinos live today—you have a dozen living in one house. So, as I said, rental was very low, and while we were all working, the money came in, and we paid our rent.

JR: So while you were living there, you'd be doing some of these other jobs.

ET: I'd be working.

JR: Was there a bus, or you walked?

ET: We walked. Oh, no such thing as riding. That's a luxury, definitely a luxury. Life wasn't easy, but I thought it was enriching, because we learned a lot of things by doing for ourselves, by working.

JR: Well, where were you going to school?

ET: My elementary school was Ka'iulani School. You know where Ka'iulani School is? But it doesn't look like that today, it's all different. (We did have a huge two-story building, but that has been demolished.)

JR: What did it look like then?

ET: Little cottages, not like the big building that you see today, up at Pālama. You know where Ka'iulani School is, don't you?

JR: Mm hm.

ET: I have to say this though, I remember several of my teachers in Ka'iulani School, because they were excellent teachers. I thought you were going to ask me questions about the education in those days. There were good teachers, there were poor teachers, there were weak teachers. (But most of the) teachers were really interested in the welfare of the kids. (Similarly), today there are many who are professional, interested.

But my social studies teacher (at Ka'iulani School) was a meany. And we used to call her Cyclop. (Remember the one-eyed giants in Greek mythology?) But (Miss Lofquist) taught us. She made us work. And we learned from her. In fact, some of the outlines that I took in social studies from her (were) utilized when I (taught) in (some) schools on Maui. Not the whole thing, but you (use) sections of (them). She was a social studies teacher, (and) she gave me a good background.

Another teacher, Mrs. Markham, taught music. I still remember (many) of the words of the songs she taught us in Hawaiian. You know, it's not easy to remember Hawaiian words unless you know the language. But she taught us, and we learned (these songs).

There were other teachers. Can't think of her name right now, but she's gone, an English teacher. (Bingo! Miss Peppin!) A math teacher, Miss (Mitchel), was good. That was a long time ago, Joe!

Then from Ka'iulani, I went on to McKinley [High School]. My education is simple. I went on to McKinley, four years in McKinley, two years at normal school, got my job, went out to teach, taught a number of years. And I became an exchange teacher in Wyckoff, New Jersey. One year on the East Coast, that was wonderful. That was a wonderful year away. And I loved crossing the Hudson [River], going to New York City, especially going to Chinatown (near Canal Street) because I missed my rice and the Chinese food. Quite a number of weekends, I would go across the Hudson River on the ferry. Quite an experience.

JR: Now, did you choose the East Coast?

ET: There were openings available in Wyckoff, New Jersey, (and another teacher, Gladys Mountcastle, and I applied). I loved the kids there. They were interested in knowing about Hawai'i. I think I was kind of a . . . In the late thirties, we were oddities. The people on the Mainland knew (little) about Hawai'i. They thought ukuleles [*ukuleles*] grew on trees, or pineapples for that matter. There was a tea given for us. (Someone) came up and asked me, "Now, what language are you going to use when you're teaching school?"

I said, "English, of course! How else would the kids understand?" I thought that was so ridiculous, but of course, I didn't . . .

JR: Did people think that you were Hawaiian?

ET: Yes, yes, yes. We were either the second group or the second year when there were exchanges made to the Mainland. Today I don't hear about teachers going on exchange. But it was a beginning. We were in the beginning group, and successful I would say. But oh, there

are other (ways) today. I mean, you don't need to be an exchange [teacher], you just go away for (your) education (degree or travel). After my year of exchange in Wyckoff, New Jersey, I took some classes at Columbia [University]. My principal wrote to me and said, "Eileen, get all the art classes that you can." I'm (not an) art teacher. She was interested in (industrial) arts—leather (craft, weaving, and others. I enrolled in a number of classes), WPA [Works Progress Administration] classes. They were courses that were offered by the federal government. And you know, I used to go down to the Bowery, and the drunks are lying around. Never bothered me. I take the subway and go down to the Bowery to take these classes. Tell me to do it today, (I'd) say, "No thanks."

(Laughter)

ET: It's not safe today.

JR: Was that the first time you'd been to the Mainland?

ET: Yes.

JR: What was that experience like?

ET: Oh, terrific, wonderful, wonderful. It was . . .

JR: Was it as surprising as I might imagine it would be to go to the Mainland for the first time?

ET: Well, I enjoyed it. It was a new experience. And I loved going to New York. I loved going to Radio City [Music Hall], to see the plays, and to the Broadway plays, and just going into the shops, all these Fifth Avenue shops, window-shopping. And, oh, I loved going to Macy's, because that's where I can afford to buy a little, few items, but not at the shops on Fifth Avenue. But it's just good to watch. An Easter parade in New York City, oh, that's an experience. There (were) so many (activities) in New York City that we never had (in Hawai'i). Imagine, coming all the way from Maui, the little hick island, or for that matter, from Hawai'i.

JR: How was the school different that you taught at, from the schools in Maui?

ET: No difference, really.

JR: Really?

ET: The kids were good.

JR: Were the kids any different?

ET: Ninety-nine percent were there for business. I (was fortunate) to hit a pretty good school. The youngsters came from average homes or above-average homes. They were there to learn. And one thing that struck me was—there was (this) Jewish girl in my class, and I didn't understand the situation at that time on the East Coast, that they're thumbs down on the Jews. (Some people) still are. And she wasn't treated too well.

But they treated me very decently. I was invited into homes for dinners. And this I remember very clearly—I think I mentioned it to you the last time—kids would come up to me and say, “Miss Chun, may we walk you home?” So they could chat with me along the way, I guess. But nice kids. Unfortunately, I didn’t keep in contact with them. But I still am in contact with three different families on the Mainland.

JR: Since that time.

ET: (Yes.) Two of them are teachers, but one is just a family (that) was very nice to me. As a whole, I would say that I had very good treatment in the school, yes. But I still recall that I had a few sad experiences when I went looking for lodging. You know, we had to look for our own lodging. “No vacancy.” (I experienced that) several times. I lived with Mrs. Holdrum, (who) was a widow. She had a son. I think (she) made her living by renting rooms out. She had a German living as one of her roomers. (Her home) was not too far away from the school. (Sometimes) the kids (would say), “May we walk you home?” That (is) something I don’t forget—you know, the kids coming up to. . . .

JR: How did you get to—I’m curious, when you left for the Mainland . . .

ET: How did I what?

JR: . . . did you take a boat? And then did you take a train?

ET: In those days, that was the only way to get across the Pacific, you take a boat.

JR: And then you took a train once you got to the West Coast.

ET: That’s right. If I remember correctly, I had sent my trunk of school materials ahead to George Washington School in Wyckoff. The janitor was the sweetest man. He took care of all of that for me, and he was so wonderful. There are many kind people in this world. I had a wonderful time.

Of course, their system of education is different from (the one in Hawai’i). We’re all centralized here in Hawai’i. I think that is one reason why we have so many problems. It’s difficult to reach the schools, because this is a centralized system. We covered all the schools in all the islands. Over there, it’s by district. You have an education board, and so much money is raised and given to the Board of Education to run the schools there. When we had PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] meetings, the president of the board of education hobnobbed with us. He came in and he served, as the teachers would serve the parents and so forth. He was down to earth. Mr. Goodman. I still remember his name. Haven’t forgotten that. (My principal supervised two schools), George Washington School (and another school nearby). When I returned from New Jersey, I gave that idea to Dr. [Deal] Crooker. He said, “Oh, it’s possible on the Mainland, but impossible to do that (here).” But I don’t see why it’s not possible.

JR: What’s the advantage to having one principal for two schools?

ET: Well, the principal really has some jobs to do. In the old days, Joe, you’d be surprised, the

principals here ran small schools. One principal for a small school. I don't think that principal has the kind of problems—he had time on his hands, so he did his personal things, (and that) is not right. I've known of principals who ran their own personal businesses while they (were) school principals. To me, they should be devoted to the welfare of the kids. Don't quote me, though, but I've seen it done. But here, in Wyckoff, (my principal) took care of two schools. (That) was good. (He) could compare the problems and correct the problems or whatever. That's why I say they're all in districts, and here, it's so centralized.

You didn't ask me the question, but I just came up with that thought. I prefer you ask me questions, I talk too much.

JR: No, no. You're answering a lot of questions as you're talking, questions that I had for later.

ET: Right.

JR: So it's okay.

ET: Oh, all right, go ahead.

JR: I did want to find a little bit more about your experiences as a student in school, when you were going to elementary school and high school.

ET: Well, I did tell you that I had some very good teachers at Ka'iulani.

JR: Were they primarily *Haole* teachers?

ET: Yes, Miss Lofquist was *Haole*. Mrs. Markham was part Hawaiian. Miss (Mitchel) was *Haole*, (and) Miss Peppin was *Haole*. Mostly *Haoles*, but they had been here for a long time.

JR: Okay, they weren't people that were brought in specifically to teach.

ET: I've taught with *Haoles* who were brought in (from the Mainland). I don't think I would want to bring in these teachers who are just here for the year or two. Their interest is more for enjoyment, not for the welfare of the kids. When we were on the neighbor islands, (the county provided) cottages, and we lived in the cottages. I didn't live with the *Haoles*. I lived with the locals. There were cottages for the *Haole* teachers, and there were cottages for the Oriental teachers, the locals.

JR: Local teachers.

ET: (Some of) these *Haole* teachers (had) rah-rah times. And I don't blame them. They're here for the year or so, and they weren't going to stay. They probably missed their homes, and they had to have enjoyment and fun in (some) ways.

What was your question, now, about how . . .

JR: No, I was just wondering what the—I was asking you more about the teachers.

- ET: Well, I think the teachers of long ago were more dedicated. They knew that their job was to go out there and teach the kids. (Another) reason why they were dedicated, I would say, is because they got the cooperation of the parents. We had PTA meetings every month.
- JR: Every month?
- ET: Yes. The parents would turn out. And the parents were appreciative of what we were doing for the kids. I have had many parents come up and thank me for teaching their children. (Later), as the years went on, when we had problems with the (youngsters) in school and you (contact) the parents, they fight you instead. They don't cooperate with you. They don't realize that why we are trying to approach them for help is because we're thinking of the interests of the kids, that if you nip the problem today, the parents are not going to have that many headaches later. And, of course, there was a togetherness in the old days. Kids were at home. They were doing chores around the house. Today's kids don't need to do anything too much, if you're comparing present-day kids with kids a long time ago. I lived at a time when the parents really had to work. And out in the country there were jobs and jobs for the children to do. After school they'd go out and cut food for the rabbits and the chickens and so forth and so on. Then they came home and helped around with the housework. Then it was dinnertime. There was no such thing as going out to—what do they do today?
- JR: They go to the mall.
- ET: There weren't such (shopping areas and attractions). You stayed at home. When it was dark, you stayed at home. You had to be with your folks. And your parent says, "Do your homework," you (listen and obey). There was no TV, no distractions. Today, you have a lot of distractions. Is it good? It's modern, time marches on.
- JR: When you got up to high school and the higher levels, did you have extracurricular activities like kids do today? You know, they have band, they have different clubs they belong to.
- ET: Yes. Now, Amy [Fern]—I think Amy's background is music. Well, I didn't have time for that. I went out to work. I worked for homes, cleaning house, helping with the cooking. I worked for this man who owned a store. His store was located on Nu'uanu Street. And we lived in the tenement, way out between Beretania [Street] and King Street. I see some of the buildings still there. Anyway, as soon as I came home from school, I walked to Nu'uanu Street to work in this store. I changed the water (in the floral containers)—he was a florist, too. He sold everything. I worked around the shop. He fed me, he gave me my dinner, and (I earned a few dollars monthly). At night, about eight o'clock, I'd walk on home. There was no time for (play, but I did belong to several clubs).
- For about a month, his store had to be renovated. He didn't discharge me, he hired me to work in his home, way beyond the (Nu'uanu) cemetery. Well, can you imagine me walking past the cemetery at night? I was just scared stiff! And that was for about a month. And that Hakubundo bookstore on Beretania Street, it was there at that time. Well, when I got close to Hakubundo (I felt safe).
- JR: You'd breathe a sigh of relief.

ET: (Right.) And in those days, I'd walk all the way down, from Hakubundo—Maunakea Street all the way down to Beretania and King Street. It's quite a distance. You have to pass River Street. I never was afraid of people. I mean, you didn't have to be afraid of people in those days. It was safe. You see the drunkards lying down, they don't harm you, they're sound asleep.

(Laughter)

ET: And I remember working as an usherette at the Hawai'i Theatre (and) at the Princess Theater. I remember teaching (English to) foreigners.

JR: I wanted to get back to the theater. What was the . . .

ET: Oh, that was a good-fun job. We were usherettes.

JR: And were those movies where they'd have . . .

ET: The best (employment) I enjoyed was at Princess (Theater), Edwin Sawtelle at the organ. Ah, that was wonderful (music). Yes, they had movies and they had (musical attractions).

JR: What was the routine? They'd start off with the organ, and then they'd have a movie?

ET: (Yes), that's it. I don't know what they do today. They (ran some advertisements), a few short (reviews) before the main features (went) on. (Also, they showed) a little bit of what's coming (the following week) so you'll be encouraged to come back again. (Sometimes visiting artists were attractions.) That's why I say it was a ball being an usherette. All we had to do (was to) see that people (got) to the right seats.

JR: Did you have a uniform?

ET: Yes, yes. Now, what else have I done? I remember as a child, when my dad had the business in 'Aiea, (that) about 4:30, my sister and I got up early in the morning—as I said, 4:30—and we'd go to the restaurant and help to serve. We were (very young) kids. These Filipino workers (ate) stew and rice (for breakfast).

JR: Stew and rice?

ET: (Yes), stew and rice. And I remembered. . . . I don't know why the pineapple people did this, and how we got the jobs, I can't tell you. But they had trainloads—(cars loaded with boxes) of pineapple—(stationary, minus the locomotives). These trains, standing still, (were) ready to (be taken) to the cannery. They didn't want people to steal the fruits, and they hired my sister and (me) [to watch the pineapple]. What could two little kids do? It was a ball—(easy), you know, (sitting or) just lying down. But in those days, people (were honest and) they didn't steal. I remember when my dad had the other store, whenever the goodies—(Chinese cakes)—from Honolulu (arrived in) 'Aiea, my mother would pack a basket of these goodies and I would walk miles and miles into the camps. In those days, (only) men (lived) in the camps. They were Chinese, of course, and they would buy these cakes and cookies from us. And late at night, very late at night, about eight o'clock, when it's dark,

we'd have to walk through the cane fields back to 'Aiea town. There was one old gentleman, he was so kind. He always tried to walk back with us (carrying) a lantern (to light the way). He died. That's why I say there's so much kindness in this world.

JR: Yeah, it sounds like a completely different place back then.

ET: Oh, life was different, life was so different. Today I don't even dare go out to the street alone, because I'm afraid I'll be attacked. (I'm hesitant) even driving at night.

Well, you ask me what I did, I'm just telling you some of these things. Another way we earned money, we picked *kiawe* beans. (Do) you know what *kiawe* trees are?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

ET: We would pick the *kiawe* beans (by bagfuls). They're about that long.

JR: What's that, about five inches?

ET: (About.) I've forgotten how much we got for each bag. Was it twenty-five cents, or was it ten cents? I don't remember. But I know I worked in the cannery for ten cents an hour. (Do) you believe it? (Later I worked in the apron room in the cannery. That's a big promotion, and I earned more, about thirty-five cents per hour. In the) apron room (I) passed aprons out (to the workers. It was cleaner work, with more responsibilities.)

JR: What were you doing for ten cents an hour?

ET: Packing. Those were terrible years. Scared to be caught, and I was caught. We had to earn money in order to live. And there was an age limit. I didn't last too long at the cannery, packing or trimming. You know, trimming is very difficult. You pick up the pineapple, and you trim the edges, and you put it back on the (moving belt), and the machine cuts it into slices. Then when it comes on the belt, (other workers pack the slices) into the cans. The pineapple juices flow up your arms. It hurts, you know, when your arm gets raw. What is the minimum wage (today)? Three dollars?

JR: Yeah, it's three or four—it's around four, I think. [The state minimum wage is currently \$3.85 per hour.]

ET: I think they (are) trying to raise it up to five-something.

JR: Yeah, I don't . . .

ET: See, times have changed. Now, what else did you ask me?

JR: Let me ask you about McKinley. When you went on to McKinley, what was that school like?

ET: As I said, I didn't have too much time for other (activities) than classes. After school, I was out, and I went on to some kind of jobs. Classes were fine. (Activities were similar to the ones today—sports, football, and of course, there was a band. I had some excellent teachers there.)

JR: Were you a hard-working student?

ET: I would say so. My mother says, "Don't fail." I (made) the Honor Society, so I guess I was hard-working. But as far as participating in the activities in school, not too much, because I didn't have time. (Pause) But I belonged to several clubs, but they weren't that meaningful to me, I guess. Did Amy tell you about what that class of '28 at McKinley did, and is still doing?

JR: Oh, the meetings?

ET: (Yes.) There was a group—she did tell you, didn't she?

JR: Yeah, they meet periodically.

ET: When I came back from Maui, retired from Maui, Amy [and] others asked me to join them. (Why) do we meet? I guess it's social. But the point is, there's still a group from the class of '28. We still get together, and that's the main thing.

JR: You mentioned that becoming a teacher was a good profession for women at that time.

ET: Oh, yes. For women, for females, becoming a teacher, becoming a secretary, were the two top priorities.

JR: And you yourself knew that you wanted to be a teacher.

ET: Had to become a teacher, because that was the fastest way I could earn money.

JR: And did you have to apply to get in to the normal school. Was there a test you have to take or anything like that? Do you remember?

ET: I don't remember, but I think they did look at your records, too. I think anybody who wanted to go got in. See, Amy went on to the university. They could afford it, to go to the university. We could not. We were on our own.

When I was at the normal school, I worked. . . . Not that I'm a writer or anything, but I used to write inches for the [*Honolulu*] *Star-Bulletin* on the activities at the normal school. I believe I was paid fifteen cents an inch, something like that? What is it now? At the normal school, I (applied for the scholarship loan). It was available (to) those who needed funds. We were to repay them as soon as we started earning. And I still remember the man, Mr. [William] Meinecke, who was in charge of that fund at the normal school. My class was the last class from the normal school. (Mr. Meinecke moved) on up to the University (of Hawai'i). When I

went out to teach, I would return a certain amount (monthly) to repay for what I had borrowed.

JR: Would you remember what the tuition was, a guess?

ET: I don't think there was any tuition.

JR: So what was the loan for?

ET: Buying books and buying—you know, for (my personal) expenses. I don't believe there was a tuition.

JR: What was the curriculum like at the normal school?

ET: Well, we had the primary. Primary took care of grades one, two, and three, I think. Then we had the intermediate, four, five, and six. (Next was) the grammar (division), seven and eight. I was in the grammar division.

JR: So that would be junior high school now, intermediate school.

ET: (Yes, I believe so.)

JR: You got to choose which of the three you wanted?

ET: (Whichever) one you think you would like to work in. That's correct. And the (funny) part of the whole thing is this, when you were assigned a job, you were given a position (in a school where there was a vacancy). It didn't matter whether you taught in the primary, (intermediate), or the grammar (division). But they try to the best of their ability (to make the best arrangements). For instance, Haiku School was my first school, (and I was assigned to the sixth grade. The vacancy was on the third level, and changes had to be made to make the sixth level available for me. There have been much improvements since my time.)

JR: So your training, then, was specifically for seventh and eighth graders?

ET: (Yes), right.

JR: And do you remember what that consisted of? Did they teach you different subjects? Or did they teach you how to be a teacher? Or . . .

ET: (Both.) We had methods, and we had subject matters. So yes, I would say so. We had (twelve) weeks of training before we were graduated. Some of the [normal school] students had to (leave the campus and go to Waimānalo for six weeks to do their practice teaching, and return for six weeks of training at the normal school.) I was lucky, I was given the training right here at the normal school. So I didn't have that expense, you know. When you go away from home you have to buy a lot of things.

JR: They had a little lab school?

- ET: (Yes.) My (supervisor) was Mrs. (Lucy) Blaisdell—she died (some years ago)—the mayor's wife.
- JR: Neal Blaisdell's wife.
- ET: She was excellent. She understood people. I mean, she was (there) to help us, and we never felt pressured. She was there to advise us. (When) we made mistakes, she would tell us what to do (and) help us along. She was a teacher. I always had a lot of aloha for her because she really helped us a lot. (Our classes) were right here at the Territorial Normal [and Training] School.
- JR: What did the school look like back then? Was it one large structure? Was it a couple of different buildings? Do you remember?
- ET: Some of the classes were held in a big structure. There were (also some) bungalows.
- JR: Bungalows?
- ET: (Yes, single structures.)
- JR: And it's up where . . .
- ET: (They've) all been demolished.
- JR: But the location of it was . . .
- ET: Yeah, it's still up there.
- JR: Near the university?
- ET: (No.) I think somebody else could give you the location better than I, because I went on to Maui. (Chuckles) [The Territorial Normal and Training School was located at the corner of Emerson Street and Lunalilo Street.]
- JR: Did you go to the school at the same time that the university was in session?
- ET: Oh yes, oh yes. That's why I said that a group of us went on to the normal school and others went on to the University of Hawai'i.
- JR: So then when the university had its summer break, the normal school would have a summer break, too?
- ET: (I am not sure.) I guess there was summer school (also). After we graduated from the normal school, most of the normal [school] graduates took summer (classes at UH and attended) extension courses (in order) to earn our degrees. I took extension courses, and I took summer classes. I remember lugging my three children down here to Honolulu. My mother took care of them while I went to classes.

JR: Why did they go back and get their degrees?

ET: With me, I just wanted to get a better background. The more subject areas you have behind you, the better informed you will be. Then they changed over to the number of credits, and we were very fortunate. If you only had a normal (school) degree, you earned so much. If you had a university degree, you earned a lot more. When that change came, I already had earned enough credits to fall into the university-degree group. And others continued (attending classes). We also, while we were teaching, had courses brought up from the university to Maui or to the neighbor islands. Many teachers (took advantage of) these courses. We'd go to these courses after school or in the evenings.

JR: Were these like refresher courses?

ET: No. If you're going towards your degree, you have to take some (required courses). Well, I took my compulsory ones down here, at the university—philosophy, and methods, all those required subjects.

JR: So at the normal school they taught you only teaching.

ET: Mostly.

JR: Were you sorry when—you were the last graduating class [of the Territorial Normal and Training School]. Were you sorry when you heard that it was going to [close]?

ET: No, it didn't matter to me, because I got my job. (Chuckles) My objective was I needed a job, and I got the job. So after I left for Maui, all of my concentration was on Maui then. (Selfish? Perhaps, but we must move along with progress.)

JR: Do you think it was a good thing having that, to give people an option of taking either a two-year or a five-year type program?

ET: I would say that times have been changing. [Two] years (are) not adequate. So you would have to go on to four years. But as I said, many did not stop at two years. I think most of the graduates—probably the majority have died off, but those who are living, I think many of them do have their four-year degree. I'm sure of that. There are only a few, if any more (are) living, who did not pursue higher degrees. With me, I was lucky that I was able to take two university study tours to earn credits.

JR: What is a study tour?

ET: You join a tour (sponsored by) the University (of Hawai'i) at the summertime, and you travel to the (different) countries. Before you begin traveling, we have a week at the campus, and they give us books on this country and that country. You study (and) prepare (yourself) for the countries that (you're) going to visit. After each tour of the country, we have a seminar or workshop or whatever you want to call it. (That) depends on the instructor. (Some instructors require a final paper.) I took two of those courses. One was to Southeast Asia, and another was around the world. By that time I had earned enough money to be pretty comfortable, so I could pursue these objectives.

JR: Yeah, yeah. You weren't working all the time, nights and so forth.

ET: Right. That was during the summer. There were many opportunities if a person wants (them). This is America. It's up to you to do whatever you want to. If you have the initiative to get a doctorate, you go ahead and get a doctorate.

JR: You told me that one of the ways you made a little extra money, [when you were] going to normal school, was writing for the [*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*].

ET: I wrote about the activities at the normal school.

JR: What kinds of things were you writing about?

ET: Anything (concerning the school activities)—if they were putting on a play of interest to the public, or somebody in school did something that was outstanding that should be publicized, (a) faculty (member receiving) some honors, (etcetera). Anything that would be of interest to the community. Now, don't forget, in those days we were a small community. Not like today, too big, too large.

What are the questions? (Laughs) I've forgotten now.

JR: No, no. We're progressing fine. When I spoke to you the last time, you told me that when you got your first teaching job, at Ha'ikū, they gave you some instructions about things to bring with you. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

ET: Well, all you were going to get when you go to a cottage—which I'm thankful for, because that was shelter—was a room. And in this room was the bed, a metal bed—you know, these single metal bed, like a cot. But they didn't supply the mattress. And also in this room was one rocker, if I remember correctly, and one bureau. So everything else you need, for your own comforts, you took with you. There was no running hot water in the cottage in those days. The only stove that I knew of was kerosene. You know, a kerosene stove (with) four burners. If there are six teachers in the cottage, the first four who were—oh, I brought a bucket. I told you that. That bucket was to heat water for our bath. Right after school, we dashed down to the cottage and put on our buckets, four buckets on this kerosene stove. And I think we have had occasions where there were six (people living in the cottage). So if you're the last two, you're out of luck.

We (each) had to bring a mattress and all the other necessities needed. We had to bring our pots and pans for our cooking. In some of the cottages, the girls did not want to pool together. Some of them wanted to do their own (cooking). In some of the cottages, they would pool together and prepare the food. I would be in charge this week, (and) I prepared the meals. The next week, somebody else would be (in charge). In some of the cottages perhaps two of them want to work together. So it all depends on the situation. In my experience, I was fortunate. I was (at) Makawao cottage—oh, at Ha'ikū cottage we were on our own. The two old-timers were not cooperative. Phyllis (and I), the new ones, worked together. That worked out all right. We brought our mattresses, our pots and pans, pails, the food needed (for a few days. Later, we shopped at the local store.) Many of the cottages did not have (window) curtains, so if you want a homelike atmosphere, you made your own

curtains, (decorated the living room with plants, etcetera).

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JR: When you got your assignment to go to Maui, were you happy or . . .

ET: Oh, I was happy to get a job. My folks depended on (me to get) a job. It was almost a necessity. I was fortunate. That's how we survived. At that time I was earning \$110 [per month]. You wouldn't believe it. And I was not the only person in that category. We would send about two-thirds of our earnings to help support the rest of the family, for the others to keep going. That's not true of only my situation. I think it was true of many of the ones who got positions in those days, and whose families were dependent on them. So it was almost a necessity.

JR: How did you enjoy teaching, when you actually were out there as a teacher in, you know, a school with your own students?

ET: Somehow I enjoyed teaching. I love teaching. I'm still teaching. I mean, I'm teaching you sometimes now. (Chuckles) I mean, I'm giving advice. I think I chose the right profession. And I enjoy the kids, the children.

Today, if you were to ask me to go into a classroom, I (would) think twice. There are so many problems. And you blame the homes. They talk about solving all our problems here in the United States. The first place they should hit is the home. But how are you going to do that? Because you have one-parent home, you have so many cases where there are abuses. The children see that. Neglected homes, all of these. . . . But in the old days, the kids worked with the parents. The kids did as the parents told them. You never defied your parents. They were your bosses, or they were your—they were your parents. So basically, I think, you have to start with the home. How we're going to do that, I don't know.

I think they're trying to. When I was at the (HSRTA) Convention on Maui last week, the mayor, Linda Lingle, addressed us. She said she's doing two things that she thinks will help (in) education. One is, she started a preschool. Kids four years old go to this school and get all the help after school (and later are picked up by parents). Another is, she started a teenage program after school for these teenagers, (and these youngsters are occupied and are under supervision). We have (such programs) in Honolulu, but it's not that obvious because we have a bigger community. She's helping (these) youngsters who need guidance, youngsters who need parents, too. Many are (non-working) parents who are (involved as leaders). I think she's doing a very wonderful thing (on Maui).

(Another of) our troubles, too, is we have too many immigrants. First you have to teach them that this is America. You can do certain things, and (you) can't do this and that. You tell a Samoan, "Yes, you may come and pick coconuts," when he first asks you. The next time he comes, he's picking without asking you. He feels that—I think that's the way it is in Samoa. There's so much learning for them.

JR: Yeah, it's just a different culture.

ET: (Right), it's entirely different. Our problems are many, but we have to attack them. I think (we must start with) the home. Parents have to take care of their children and (don't expect) others (to) do the job for them. They think the schools can do (everything). The schools can't do that for them. Schools are there to teach them the subject matters, (to teach them trades) and the cultures, (but) not how to live. Well, how to live in a way, but the basics mostly, I think, are learned at home. Don't you agree?

JR: Sure.

ET: I think we got our basics from our own families, right at home. You had to work, you had to respect your family members, you have to help one another. Today there's too much selfishness in this world. Well, I'm not preaching, Joe. (Chuckles)

JR: Did you feel that the normal school had prepared you?

ET: Adequately, but you have to continue and educate yourself. (Yes), I would say adequately to (deal) with children and (teach them) some of the subject matters, like your elementary math, English, and social studies and a little of the culture. For those who were not interested in the three R's, we taught them how to work with their hands. We were given that kind of training. I even had to go out and teach gardening.

JR: You did?

ET: Sure. And how to sew, which I (don't enjoy).

(Laughter)

ET: Cooking, I loved.

JR: What grade youngsters were you teaching when you first got to Ha'ikū?

ET: I got sixth graders.

JR: Sixth graders?

ET: (Yes), that was good. Later, I got sixth, seventh, and eighth (department work). But my last ten years, I think I mentioned it to you, I became a librarian. At that time, there was a need for librarians, even part-time librarians. (The department) decided that every school (with a sizable enrollment) should have a library. I had library training, and when I was at Pā'ia School, I took the library as part-time (on my schedule). They released me from two classes of work—or teaching—and I handled the library. So I had a background for that. I did take library work when I was at normal school. (Later) when the need for librarians became so great [that] the department didn't have enough trained librarians, the superintendent asked me (to) take (the) 'Īao School library. I said I (would) take it under several conditions. One is that I don't have to come back to Honolulu (to) take library credits.

(I was) accepted, (but I did take some courses later. I also) did a traveling librarian's job. I went to another school, a smaller school, to help them out one day a week. Then when more

librarians were trained, I became a full-time librarian at 'Īao School.

JR: Maybe we could go over your career as a teacher, just in terms of the different places you went. You were at Ha'ikū for how long?

ET: One year.

JR: One year.

ET: Mm hm. (My superintendent inquired whether I would like to transfer to another school at the close of the school year. I jumped at the opportunity.)

JR: And then?

ET: Went to Makawao School. (After some years) at Makawao, I went on maternity leave. I also had a year away. I went as an exchange teacher (and then returned to Makawao School).

JR: So you stayed there for nine or ten years or so?

ET: At Makawao?

JR: Yeah.

ET: I would say all of that. Then from there, after my leave, I went to Pā'ia School.

JR: You took a few years off for maternity leave.

ET: (Yes.) My principal at Makawao School had been transferred to Pā'ia, and she asked that I return to Pā'ia School, so I did.

JR: And how long do you think you were there?

ET: Oh, let me see. Gee, how many years was I at 'Īao School? I don't remember, quite a while.

JR: Well, you went to Pā'ia . . .

ET: (Yes.)

JR: . . . and then you went to 'Īao.

ET: (Correct.)

JR: Okay.

ET: I (traveled), I taught in classrooms, then the need for librarians came up, and I became a traveling librarian for about two years, and then full-time for about ten years. That's all. That's all there is to this career.

(Laughter)

JR: You know, most teachers, when they went to teach on the neighbor islands after they graduated from the normal school or the UH, they taught on the neighbor islands for maybe two or three years, then they came back to town.

ET: They requested (to return to Honolulu).

JR: Now, you stayed. You're a Honolulu person . . .

ET: I married a Maui boy, so I stayed.

JR: And you liked staying on the neighbor islands?

ET: Well, I would (have loved) to come back to O'ahu, but (George's) mother was living at that time, and she refused to come to O'ahu. So I made the sacrifice, if you want to call it that. Then she passed away. And since I was already teaching at this and that, I remained on Maui to finish up, because I retired from 'Īao School. It wasn't too many years, I think, after she [died that I] retired, about ten years. About ten years. . . . (Yes), I would say so. What's the next question?

JR: What was it like being a neighbor-island teacher? Did you talk to Honolulu teachers. . . . I guess what I'm trying to find out is, was it any different to be a teacher on the neighbor islands than it was to be . . .

ET: Well, they tell me that when you teach city children, they're more outgoing, and that island children are more hesitant about—they're quiet, and they're not that outspoken. Well, isn't that true? People who live in the city have experiences, and they speak a lot more and are more knowledgeable. Children in those days don't talk back to you. It's the hardest things to get them to express themselves. They're more retiring, (and) they're afraid to speak up. But today you can't shut them up.

JR: What was the hardest thing you had to do as a teacher, do you think? You know, of all the things you had to do or were responsible for?

ET: Sometimes agreeing with the ideas of certain principals. But I never expressed it. I made do, I got along. I think I had a very satisfying teaching career. I mean, I didn't make waves. I was very active in the teachers' organization on Maui. I was president of the Maui Teachers Association, president of the Maui Classroom Teachers' [Association], (charter member and later president of Gamma Chapter of Beta Beta State, Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, etcetera).

JR: What would a group like [the Maui Classroom Teachers' Association] do?

ET: We got together, we talked about our teachers' problems, we talked about problems with the children. I meet with you, I say, "Hey, how's your class there at Kahului School?" And, "How do you do this? What would you do with a youngster like that, and how would you take care of him?" (We have workshops, listen to speakers, etcetera.)

JR: So you'd share your . . .

ET: (Yes), sharing of ideas, getting ideas, and how to solve different problems. It's up to the individual. But in any association, you have your own club problems and activities—getting speakers to come and address you, like having a convention, and doing your own things, as I say. I think there were many opportunities to meet with your friends that you don't see a long time, and you chat with them, and, "How do you do this? How do you do that?" Exchanging of ideas.

I was busy with girl scouting. I think I mentioned that to you one time. And when the war [i.e., World War II] came, I told you, I believe, that I had a troop that took flowers to the soldiers in the hospital. And we made ashtrays and we made the knick-knacks for these boys who were far away from home, took them goodies and things like that.

(December 7, 1941, is a date memorable to many, but it's an unforgettable date for me. It was a Sunday morning, and as usual, I was correcting sets of the youngsters' test papers. I had my radio tuned to a Honolulu radio station. The announcement came over the air that Pearl Harbor was being attacked and bombed.

(Immediately, thoughts of another incident that had occurred in New Jersey on October 30, 1938, came to mind. I refer to *War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells. It had been revised to make the setting in America rather than England. So realistic was Orson Wells in his presentation that those who had not heard the explanation at the beginning of the play or had not read the *New York Times* believed that martians from another planet had truly arrived to annihilate the people on this earth. Thousands of people on the East Coast panicked and left their homes to avoid invading martians. The highways were clogged, and hundreds of calls were made to the police stations for help and instructions.

(When the announcement came over the air that Pearl Harbor was being bombed, these thoughts struck me. "Why do pranksters attempt to scare the Hawaiian population?" Shortly, my husband, George, who was the radio operator for Hawaiian Airlines, called home to announce that we were being attacked.

(Maui, at that time, did not have a radio station. How could the people be contacted to receive instructions and news? The army contacted the "hams" on Maui. George's ham equipment was used to set up a radio station. The hams rallied to the call and in shifts operated the station. George was compensated for his equipment, but I often wonder who has my two albums of records on classical music. Charge it to damages of the war, and at that, it was a minimal price to pay!)

JR: I've talked to Honolulu teachers, and some of them had to go with the kids out to the pineapple fields or the sugarcane fields and supervise them while they . . .

ET: While they what?

JR: During the war, it's my understanding that the laborers were in short supply, so they used high school students . . .

ET: Oh, I see, those were the older children.

JR: Yeah. How did the war affect you guys?

ET: Oh, it affected Makawao School greatly. The whole school was taken over and turned into a hospital.

JR: So where were the classes taught?

ET: In any empty, vacant buildings in the town. (We) took over the Japanese[-language] school. (The county) put up a few—what do you call these overnight—you know, wooden buildings that you put up in a week's time. What do you call those now?

JR: Yeah, I know what you're talking about.

ET: We had some of those (buildings). And as I said, we taught schools in these old, vacant stores in Makawao town, and (at) the Japanese school. I think there were some classes held in a couple of vacant rooms in the (teachers') cottage. Make do with everything.

JR: Yeah, sounds like it would be hard though to teach in one of those . . .

ET: Oh, you bet. You bet it was difficult, because you have to pack your materials with you. Whatever you needed for the day's work, you have to take it away. Not like having everything set up. You can't stay late in school to prepare your work and put them on the . . . It's different. One of the things that we had to do during the war was to register (and fingerprint) all [residents]. The teachers were the ones who had to do that. So thankfully, in this war we didn't have to do anything. I mean, this Persian Gulf War.

JR: Oh, yeah.

ET: But yes, the war affected us greatly. And then you have concerns, too. Your families are here on O'ahu. How did they fare? What are they doing? And are they getting enough (food)? You were rationed in this and rationed (on) that. You do have concerns. What else did they tell you? I'm interested [in] what they did.

JR: Well, I've heard about the registering.

ET: Yeah.

JR: They had to fingerprint people. Everybody got an ID card.

ET: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JR: And the picking of the pineapple or the harvesting of the sugarcane.

ET: Oh, the students did that?

JR: Yeah. The teachers had to go over there and supervise.

ET: But that was very minimal, though, just a few.

JR: I heard that some of the schools were used for recovery areas, you know, like hospitals.

ET: Well, ours was completely taken over. We just moved out. Everything was turned over to them. In fact, it was called the Makawao Hospital. (Chuckles) I'm trying to recall what some of the things. . . . You ask me a question, and it'll probably come back. Right at the moment, what else did we do that was so different during wartime?

JR: Was it hard to get textbooks and things like this during the war? I mean, were supplies for school in shortage?

ET: Well, (school) had already started. The war started on December 7, 1941. School started in September, and all the book requests were already in. It was the wounded soldiers who came into . . .

JR: What about '42 and '43? Did things tend to normalize after the first year?

ET: I think as far as textbooks and things were concerned, we were okay. You can make do. I mean, you don't have to have everything brand-new. Anyway, the department never gave us enough money. I remember when we went out to teach, we bought most of our supplies that the classrooms needed, like thumbtacks, and writing papers and things for the kids, pencils, because . . .

JR: You had to buy those yourself?

ET: (Yes), in many instances. (When) the kids couldn't afford them, many of the teachers just bought and gave them to the (children). Today, when I hear about, oh, request for this and request for that, I say, "They don't know what (chuckles) teaching was like a long time [ago]." Supplies were really lacking in those days, and if we had them, it (was) very minimal. The war days, teaching during the war days. . . . Fortunately it wasn't that long. I mean, it didn't go on and on and on. (We were attacked on) December 7, (1941), but by '45 it was over. You make do with what you have, so it wasn't too bad. What I didn't like in those days in teaching was having a principal with a wife teaching in the same school.

JR: Was that a common . . .

ET: Well, at Ha'ikū School, my first (school), I experienced that. And I spoke against that, of course, that that shouldn't be. Later they changed (the ruling), so that if both husband and wife are in education, only one can stay in one school. A wife cannot teach with the husband and (vice versa). Well, you learn as you go along. So that was all right. Tell me, what else did they do here on O'ahu [during World War II]? I'm curious.

JR: Well, obviously I wasn't around back then, so I don't know that much.

ET: But when you spoke to these (Honolulu) people, is that the only thing, working in the pineapple fields?

JR: Yeah, those are the things that stick in my mind.

ET: One other thing, now that I'm talking—what did we used to do? Not during the war years—every year Maui (had) a Maui County Fair. That's the activity of the year, and all kids (from the different schools) do go. The plantations (transported the children in) big trucks. They had boards laid across, and the kids would sit on (these. Generally) two teachers (accompanied the children), and we'd ride down with the kids and we'd ride back. Everybody goes to the Maui County Fair.

JR: When you were teaching, was there such a thing as a field trip, other than, say, going to the fair?

ET: (No.) But I did have a principal who required that we made home visits. She was an *akamai*—she was an okay principal. We had to visit every home before school started. We had to jot down what we observed. That's wonderful, but you can't get any teachers to do that today. The unions wouldn't permit it (anyway).

JR: What exactly did you do?

ET: We visited the home (of each child). I (would) make an appointment, the way you just made an appointment with me. "May I come and visit you at a certain hour, sit down, talk to you about your child?"

JR: Is this before or after you had taught the child?

ET: Before. We observe without their noticing that we are observing. Is the home nicely furnished? Do they have a refrigerator? Do they have a radio? In those days, it was radio. Do they have these luxuries of life? Does that child have parents who are caring? You can tell, by talking to them.

JR: I've never heard of that before.

ET: Oh, I was under this particular principal, and she was an okay principal. I thought that was excellent. But many of the teachers didn't want to do that. You're taking your own time. But to me, it gave me a good understanding of the child. Why is this child rebellious? Does he have enough food at home? You can tell, by a visit like that.

JR: So how many kids would be in a typical class?

ET: All depends, you know, thirty-six, thirty-six to forty.

JR: So you maybe visited forty homes?

ET: (Yes.)

JR: Before the start of school?

ET: Right. Not everybody, not every school did that. This particular principal, she did that at

Makawao. Later, when she went to Pā'ia, I don't think she (requested visitations). I don't recall going home-visiting. But I do recall that whenever a child had problems, I would make the (initial) call and discuss the problems with the parents, and I would get their cooperation. Today, you approach a home and tell the parent, "Something's this and this, your child is not doing this and this."

"Oh, it's your fault. It's not the child's fault." Nor is it his [i.e., the parent's] fault. So times, as I say, have changed.

## END OF SIDE TWO

### TAPE NO. 21-13-1-91; SIDE ONE

JR: We haven't really talked much about the subjects. What different subjects did you have to teach over the years?

ET: Oh, my two subjects were social studies and English. Social studies is very interesting. With that background that I had, going away as an exchange teacher, I became (more) interested. Consequently I tried to do as much traveling as I could, and I shared (my experiences) with the kiddies, with the students. Social studies is not only about countries, it's current events, (people, etcetera). We had, in those days, a very good paper called *The Weekly News*, I think, which we subscribed to. (It) was very important to keep informed of what was going on (in the world).

JR: That was written for the students in school?

ET: Yes, that's right. Much later we introduced (reading the daily paper, the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, in) the classrooms. That was to encourage them to read the paper (at home). I wonder how many of our (youngsters) do read the (daily) paper today?

JR: And you also taught English.

ET: English, grammar and writing. If you don't like to correct paper, don't become an English teacher. It takes hours to correct papers.

JR: How many hours do you think you put into your work each day?

ET: Oh, we got to school early in the morning, sometimes long before 7:30. We start to put our work on the blackboard, or if there are youngsters who need help, they're there for help. There (was) one boy who came—at Pā'ia School, who came in at 7:30 (A.M.) for many, many months, and I helped him with his English and whatever he needed [help] on. He had been communicating with me up to maybe about five years ago. Whatever happened to him? I didn't hear from him, and I didn't pursue it. I should have, (and) I regret that. I don't know what happened to him.

But to go back, many times we gave up our recesses to help youngsters who needed a little help, just a little push. After school, we (are available to help) youngsters. (Often when youngsters do not do their homework, they're kept after school.) Today, I understand that if you don't have the cooperation of the parents, and you want a youngster to remain with you after school, it's very difficult. Parents don't want the youngsters to go home late. (In many cases, the youngsters are picked up, and that would throw off the drivers' schedules.)

My weekends—there were two tests that I gave every week, which I corrected over the weekends. That was when I was teaching the (non-departmental classes), sixth grade or the seventh grade. One was a spelling test, another was math. (Math is) objective, easy to correct. We also wrote our plans (over the weekends). Every week, on a Monday, we submitted our plan books to the principal, and she'd go over (the plans—write) suggestions, (delete sections, approve and sign them).

JR: So what kinds of things would you put in? Like, "Monday I'll do this, Tuesday I'll . . ."

ET: (Yes.) "Eight to 8:30, this, this. Eight-thirty to 9:15, this, this." Whatever you're going to do.

JR: You had to do that for all five days in the week?

ET: (Yes), five days a week. Plan for the week.

JR: And you pretty much stuck to that plan?

ET: (Yes), because it was a requirement. The principal must have a plan book submitted every week. They don't do that anymore. That's the difference. Despite (the daily plan), we had to prepare a general plan for the year. That takes time to prepare.

JR: How lengthy would that be?

ET: Oh, a number of pages. (The) general plan (may) not (be) too lengthy, but the weekly plans would be (in) detail. That plan also is (intended for use by a substitute).

JR: Oh, I see.

ET: Didn't anyone tell you that? You look so surprised.

JR: Well, I haven't. . . . I think with each person I interview, I'm talking . . .

ET: Differently.

JR: Differently.

ET: Okay. I put you in the spot all the time.

JR: With the yearly plan, now, "In September and October, it will be this."

ET: (Yes.) I say, "I'm going to cover . . ."

JR: Well, for an English class.

ET: No, let's take social studies.

JR: Okay, we'll take social studies.

ET: "September, October, I'm going to cover certain countries in Europe, or I'm going to cover South America. I'm going to cover this and that." That gives you the general idea.

JR: And then the principal might come back and say, "Well, maybe you should do this."

ET: I haven't experienced that. But I think many principals don't even care. Or I would say that he may be observing what you are doing, but he doesn't realize you're not following the plan.

JR: Oh, I see.

ET: And then, of course, the department does give you a general plan—you cover this and this and this in the year. (As long as the required areas are covered, sequence is not important. I would like to add at this point that there was a difference in class operation between Maui and O'ahu. Maui used the 8-4-4 Plan: grades 1-8, four years of high school, four years of college. On O'ahu, the 6-3-3 Plan was utilized: grades 1-6, grades 7-9, grades 10-12, and then college.) Okay, what's the next question?

JR: Oh, let me think. When you moved on Maui—you stayed on Maui, but you went to a number of different schools, and it seems that, as your career went along, you became more focused on being a librarian. Is that correct?

ET: I had less years as a librarian than as a classroom teacher. When I was a librarian, I had classes come into the library, to teach them how to use the library system. That was easy. You teach them (how to use the library, the Dewey Decimal System. Often teachers send a section of their classes to do reference work. I supervised and worked with them.)

JR: If you were given a choice between working in the library all the time and teaching classes all the time . . .

ET: I think I'd prefer the classes now. Today, I would prefer the classes. Why?

JR: Sure.

ET: Well, in the library today, there are too many new things that are happening. You have to be into computers. You have to be into these technical—into machinery, and (the librarian is supposedly the expert in operation. Also, equipment and books are returned to the library at the end of the school year. There's too much clerical work.) We order the textbooks for the teachers. We have to process the books for the teachers, plus the books for the library. We had to keep a record of all these machineries and know how to operate them also. If a teacher has trouble (operating), we should be the ones to teach them (or) correct (the) mistakes. No,

that's not for me. I think dealing with kids is more interesting in a way. Next question? I think I've exhausted whatever it is you want.

JR: No, no, no. We really haven't talked about your children much, but I know that they went to English standard school.

ET: Kaunoa School at that time was the English (standard school).

JR: What are your thoughts on the English standard schools?

ET: It was justifiable (to have English standard schools on the neighbor islands), because (the) children who come from professional families (would be restricted in many ways). It would be (unfair) to put them in with these youngsters who can't even speak English, whose backgrounds are so—behind is the word—different, experiences also. (At) an English standard school, (the children) all come from homes (where) English (is spoken). They have had experiences in life that these camp kids or plantation kids wouldn't have. You know, their parents take them to this place, and many of them even travel. So (when a child attends) a standard school, (he) can move faster, move on ahead. But then (the standard schools were) done away with. Personally, I wanted my (children to attend) the standard school because there would be more opportunities for them to move on ahead. Now, how dull for a kid to sit down in a classroom and wait for this child to learn how to [do something] that you already know. Well, as I said, that was done away with. And where else did my kids go? My kids went to public schools. From Kaunoa, they went on to Baldwin [High] School—that's a public high school—then on to the University of Hawai'i. Except my daughter, she went away to the Mainland, and she's still there. (Chuckles)

JR: She's a teacher isn't she?

ET: (Yes.) She graduated from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

JR: Did she get that from you, the wanting to be a teacher?

ET: I don't know. I really don't know.

JR: Do you think that . . .

ET: My son Leslie Tam got his doctorate in microbiology from the University of Hawai'i. He teaches classes, besides doing research at the—I don't think he got that from me. He's at the research [facility] here, at Lē'ahi [Hospital]. But he says he has to (teach) classes many times. My first son graduated from the University of Hawai'i. Then he (joined) the air force, and now he's working with the commander-in-chief of the Pacific. He has a very good position.

JR: What have you done with yourself since retiring?

ET: What have I done?

JR: With yourself. You've traveled a lot. Do you . . .

- ET: I've traveled, but I've been so involved with my teachers' organizations, retired [teachers], state as well as local.
- JR: I want to find out about the award that you received.
- ET: What about that? That's nothing. Every year—you know about the HEA [Hawai'i Education Association], don't you? You know about Dr. Dan Tuttle and (Dr. Hubert) Everly. Do you know Dr. Tuttle personally?
- JR: Yes.
- ET: He's a gung-ho person. He's so knowledgeable. Don't you agree? You better say yes.
- JR: Yeah, he's a very smart man.
- ET: He's smart. Well, he was one of the early—in the infancy of HEA, he was there. And he (accomplished) a lot. Then he (left the HEA). I think he taught at the University (of Hawai'i).
- JR: Yeah, he was a political science professor.
- ET: Professor, and only recently—let's see, three years ago he came back to the HEA, as a part-time [executive director]. He has put together many projects for the benefits of the retired teachers, like (automobile) insurance, health plans, offering things to the teachers which were not done before. The HEA decided to recognize (outstanding volunteer retired teachers each year. The awards were made at the annual convention of the HSRTA, Hawai'i State Retired Teachers Association. It's not that big a deal.)
- JR: I think you're being modest.
- ET: No, to me it's no big deal. They find out what you've been doing, as you ask what have I been doing. I've been very busy with HSRTA, that's Hawai'i State [Retired Teachers Association], and with the ORTA [O'ahu Retired Teachers Association]. In ORTA, we have many activities. We have a scholarship fund there. Amy told you all about it, the Trude Akau Scholarship. We earn money for that. How do we earn money? We go *lū'au* waitressing for this particular caterer. We stuff envelopes for a credit union. How else do we earn money? Anytime someone offers us something where we can earn some money, we do that. And besides that, the Department of Education requests every year volunteers to sit at the Art and Photography Show at the Ala Moana [Center]. We volunteer for that. At PRAISE, at the Science Fair, at the Industrial Art Fair, which is coming up. I think there's one going on right now. That's PRAISE, I think. It ends today, or was it yesterday? Next month will be the Industrial Arts (Exhibit). So we have a lot of volunteer work. And for a while I did Meals on Wheels, until I got a health problem. How do I spend my time?
- JR: Well, it sounds like there isn't much time left, not after you've done all those things.
- ET: (Both) my brother and sister are aging, and I do spend—I shop for (my brother), I do this and that, as much as I can. I've taken care of an ailing mother for many years, (and) a sister, after I retired. So what else did I do? I travel a little bit. I visit Barbara every now and then.

JR: That's your daughter?

ET: (Yes), in Colorado. No, there aren't too many hours left.

JR: It's curious to me that all the different teachers I speak to, they're all very active in community volunteer work or whatever. Is there something about being a teacher that—is there something about wanting to go into teaching that you just . . .

ET: Well, ORTA (receives) all of these requests. "May we have volunteer for this? Would you come and help?" If I were to volunteer for all the requests, there wouldn't be enough of me to go around. True, truly. American Red Cross would like somebody to sit in the office and this and that, and the [Waikīkī] Aquarium wants people. Everything. Then I belong to a couple of other organizations that I'm involved on the boards. And that takes time, so I'm busy.

JR: Yeah, it sounds like you're very busy.

ET: Too busy. (Chuckles)

JR: I appreciate you making time for me, though.

ET: Well, if I can help out, okay. And, you know, strangely that you requested, because Dr. Teruo Ihara—you know him?

JR: Yeah.

ET: He spoke to me about doing something for the (celebration of the) 150th year of [public] education [in Hawai'i], and then he (did not bring up the matter again). Then you talked to me, and I said, "Sure, I'll do what I can." But this is easy. This is simple. It's just (chatting).

JR: It's easier than being a teacher.

ET: I mean, this is simple, I'm just chatting with you. In fact, you're causing me to bring back memories of a long time ago. (We who have lived during these periods of change in the growth of Hawai'i have been blessed! We have witnessed and experienced tremendous changes—from wood stoves to microwave ovens—have watched a war in the Persian Gulf thousands of miles away on the tube, and especially, we have been fortunate to live in beautiful Hawai'i!)

END OF INTERVIEW

# **PUBLIC EDUCATION IN HAWAI'I Oral Histories**

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**"On Wings of Discovery"**  
Ka Ho'ike Ma 'Iolani