BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: FLORENCE YOKOMOTO, retired plantation store clerk

Florence Yokomoto, Japanese, was born in Hanapepe, Kauai, September 16, 1907. Her parents came to Hawaii from Yamaguchi, Japan. Her mother died when Florence was two years old. Her father ran a small store on Kauai.

Florence attended elementary school in Eleele and went to Kauai High School. In 1926, while in her senior year, she married her husband, Allen. They moved to Oahu in January, 1936. Her husband worked as an assistant in the Waialua Sugar Company Recreation Department. Florence worked as a clerk in the plantation store until her retirement in 1965.

The Yokomotos have one son and currently reside in Haleiwa.
NOTES FROM UNRECORDED INTERVIEW

with

Florence Yokomoto

August 12, 1976

Haleiwa, Hawaii

BY: Gael Gouveia

(Follow up conversation at time transcript presented for review. More information regarding 1946 strike.)

Mike Nagata was the leader; Mrs. Yokomoto worked closely with him. He assigned different tasks to various people. Groups were formed to do such tasks as hunt, fish, plan entertainment programs, etc.

Mrs. Yokomoto talked with the ladies a lot, keeping them informed regarding what was happening. The strike committee met about once a week.

There was a soup kitchen. Whole families could use it. Japanese pride prevented many Japanese from using the kitchen. Many Portuguese and Filipinos used it.

At that time, it was necessary to pay house rent but plantation was good enough not to force the issue. No one had to move because of the strike. People in essential positions continued to work. Many programs were planned to keep strikers' morale up. Boxing, singing, etc. were the kinds of activities planned according to Mrs. Yokomoto. The strike was settled without violence.

A significant event in the lives of the Yokomotos was their first and only ten day trip to California in 1971 with their five year old grandson. Mrs. Yokomoto and her grandson were impressed with plants that were cut into the shapes of animals. They found the climate not so nice as Hawaii. Their grandson suggested giving their leis to the motel cleaning lady. She was very thrilled with them. The little boy made friends very easily. They enjoyed San Diego which they found to be a very clean city. They really enjoyed the zoo. They also visited Canoga Park and North Hollywood.
GG: Okay, I'm just going to say first that this is an interview with Florence Yokomoto in her home in Haleiwa. And today, I thought we'd talk some about your childhood. We'd start with that, if that's okay with you. Now, as I recall you told me that you were born and raised on Kauai. Right?

FY: Yes.

GG: And you were raised by Chinese family?

FY: Oh, well, it's not exactly raised, but since we were, you know, next door, and they had a little girl that was one year older than I, so we somehow live (Laughs) like---I used to go over there, play and eat, and all that, you know, and then, of course, I went home because it's right close by. I stayed with my dad.

GG: How many children were there in your family?

FY: I was the only one. I had a small sister that died when my mother passed away.

GG: I see. Now, being with the Chinese during the day so much, I wondered were there Japanese customs that were retained by your father as far as, perhaps Japanese foods, or cultural things that you did?

FY: Oh, yes, very much.

GG: But you learned both?

FY: Ah, yes.

GG: I wonder if you could tell me about some of those?

FY: Well, actually, I don't remember too much, because those days, the kids are kids. They just played, and the old people would do most of the things for the children, you know. And so, actually...I don't know. My dad was the one that was strictly Japanese custom, you know. So he would teach me things like cooking. Of course,
nothing too fancy, but at least what is simple, and yet, I should know. And like I didn't have my mother, so he would teach me mending clothes. He would teach me all that. So I've learned from him cooking, housecleaning—of course, comes natural to any girl, I suppose. (Chuckles) So, I did all those things and actually I spent time with the Chinese people. Sometimes evening meals. But, I was always home in the evening with my father.

GG: Now he had a little store, as I recall you told me. That was his own store? Not plantation store?

FY: No, no. That's his own. See, Hanapepe is an independent town, you know. A small town. So, everybody had business. But their own.

GG: I see. But he made time in the evening to spend with you to teach you things that he felt it was important for you to...

FY: Yeah, well, whenever he wasn't busy, then he would teach me how to do mending and minor sewing, getting and putting things together, and cooking, and he, of course, wanted me to learn Japanese language, so...

GG: I was going to ask if you went to Japanese language school, or...

FY: He spoke Japanese, of course, like to mostly Japanese I went to Japanese school. I sent till eighth grade Japanese school, so I was able to read and write fairly well until I left for high school. That's when most people already got away from their... parental language and then spoke more English, so you sort of lose some of it....

GG: Well, now, you attended Japanese school in addition to your regular English education in elementary school? How long did you usually spend in Japanese school?

FY: Oh, was just an hour and a half, maybe. At the longest, two hours, but most of the time it was between one and one and a half hours.

GG: And did you learn only language or did you learn other things in Japanese school, too?

FY: Yes, we learned to write with this Japanese—-they call that fude. That's a point in the front that's felt-like, but it's more brushed. Tapered.

GG: Do they call that calligraphy? Is that...

FY: Yes, yes. And then being girls, we had to learn to sew, you know, like dish towels and things. Little at a time. And as you got to the upper grades, we were taught to sew kimono. Put the kimono together, you know, the pieces. But, of course, that I have lost completely. I'm sorry, but that's what everybody, I think, have the same problem.
GG: Did they put on cultural programs, or did you have special festivals? When you made the kimonos, then what did you...

FY: Yes, we had--they call Girl's Day when you dress in kimono, and there's some religious things. Girls would dress in kimono and they comb their hair in Japanese fashion, and then perhaps put pins on it, you know, ornaments. And they do certain kind of dances for certain occasions. Then, that's about all, I think.

GG: Now, were there other days besides Girl's Day, when they did....

FY: Yes, they had some church days, you know. Certain religious ceremonies. They had. And then we had this bon dance. That's outside of school, but then we learn at the school, too.

GG: Did you enjoy the dancing? Did you like it?

FY: Oh, yes. I just love dancing, those days.

GG: And do you remember any, now?

FY: Well, just the simple ones that was the rage at the time. Of course, even now they have, but, they have more fancy, you know, dances now days, which I don't know. But I did enjoy dancing.

GG: And when you were going to elementary school, now, were the teachers mostly haoles at that time, or....

FY: Oh, yes. Most of them were. We didn't have Oriental teachers, very many. Few, but most of them were haoles, yes.

GG: And did you study regular classes like they do now, or....what were your school days like?

FY: Yes. Well, we had one teacher that taught everything. You know. From reading, writing, math, and language--I mean, English language, and science, spelling. Some of us who loved art could, you know, study that, too, but I wasn't one of them.

(Laughter)

GG: What about social studies? Did you have history or something like that?

FY: Yes, history, we had. Those days we never called social studies, like now but instead we had the history and grammar, arithmetic, spelling, English, literature. Of course, poetry all comes under the literature things, so...

GG: Did you--in Japanese school, did you get into poetry there, too, or ....like haiku?

FY: No, we did not. The main thing in Japanese language is they stress that reading and writing. The simple--you begin with the kana which is the simplest Japanese writing. Then come the hiragana that's in between the top ones that they write the hard characters. But I
can do the kana and the hiragana, but the kanji, which is the hard characters, some of them I still remember, but most of it...well, if I kept up, maybe by reading magazine, Japanese magazines or newspapers, maybe I could have been better than what I am now. But, as far as conversation, I can carry fairly well, so....(Laughs)

GG: Now, in the school, at that time, did they use reading materials? Did they have newspa...

FY: They had readers.

GG: Did they ever have newspapers or....

FY: Newspapers, no, I don't think because I've never had newspaper reading at school. Mostly, they had readers, you see, so we read those and they had the story books in Japanese. Old stories and like "Momotaro" and....things like that, huh? So, we had read all those things.

GG: And, now in the English school it was in Hanapepe, right? Is that where you went to school?

FY: No, we went to the Elleele School.

GG: I see.

FY: It's up on the hill. We didn't have school in Hanapepe at that time. We just walked up. We walked and then climbed the hill.

GG: How far was it? From where you lived?

FY: Oh, I'd say maybe....I can't measure distance, so that's a problem, but, anyway, it was quite a walk because we had to walk up the hill. And rainy days we used to slide.

(GG laughs)

FY: And we used to be a mess by the time we got to school. But it was quite a ways.

GG: And about how many of you were walking together?

FY: Oh, we had quite a few. All the neighbors, you know, the children around the neighborhood. My next door, the Chinese girl and her brothers. And then we had others. From across the river. They lived in the valley.

GG: Different nationalities, too, or....

FY: Oh, yes. Different nationality. Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, Philippines. We didn't have too many Koreans, not from our area, anyway.
GG: Okay, well, now, moving along a little further to when you got to high school, where did you go to high school over there?

FY: After I finished Elele School, I went to the Waimea Junior High School. Those days they didn't—you know, it was quite a distance, so the next closest school we went to. And we went to Waimea Junior High. They had freshman, sophomore class over there.

GG: How did you get there?

FY: We went on the bus. After finishing junior high school, then we had to transfer to Kauai High School, because that is the only school that had four years of schooling. So, I went to Kauai High School, and then it was too far to commute, eh, those days, so we had boarding school, you know. Dormitory. Girl's dormitory. And so we stayed there. And we walked to the school. Yes, we walked from—of course, it's—we were on a level road so it wasn't that bad, but rainy days, it was hectic. (Laughs)

GG: And it rains a lot over there, too, doesn't it? What kinds of things did you do with your schoolmates for fun, or pleasure? Especially now—by the time you were living in the boarding school. Then, did they have regular times you had to be in or do certain things?

FY: Oh, yes, each of us, you know, that are in groups, we had to do—help with the kitchen work, washing dishes and clean up. Of course, you do your own—there were about four or five of us in one room, so we all chipped in cleaning. And days we all had to do laundry, and when we went to school, five days a week, so we looked forward for Saturday, because that's the day we could go shopping. And we used to walk from our dormitory and through the Grove—they call that Grove Farm. They have lot of pear trees, mango trees, you know, all. And then we walk through there and go up and right into town and we did shopping. Some of us took the afternoon show, but we had to be back in time for dinner.

GG: So then you stayed there seven days a week, or did you go home any-time?

FY: No. Stayed seven days....and then we used to go home once a month.

GG: And did your father have to pay a fee for you to be at the boarding school or....

FY: Yes, yes. He paid for the boarding.

GG: And other than shopping, what other kinds of things did you do for fun?
FY: Oh, well, we got together. We sang songs. Some of them who were instrumental, they played music, you know, instrument, and then we got in group. In the evenings, every night we had to sit together and have chapel like, eh. And then, after that, then we could do whatever—well, of course, we had to study first.

(Laughter)

FY: Before anything. On weekends, especially, we got together and did things, like singing. Some of them who want to dance would dance. Those who want to play games would play games. And those who are athletic minded will go and get themselves to play tennis or something. And we had a big yard so we played volleyball. And softball to pass the time. And Sundays, of course, we had to go to church. Sunday school and church. (Chuckles) So...

GG: What kind of church was it?

FY: A Christian church. The Lihue Union Church we call it. So we went all over there. And afternoon was our day. You know, we could do as we want. But most of us just stayed around because no transportation, you know, so we just...

GG: Did anybody have bicycles or...

FY: No. Nobody had bicycle. So even if we wanted to—I guess, we could have, but then, nobody—that's sort of a luxury like, you know.

GG: What about horses? Did anybody have horses?

FY: No. Not at the dorm. (Laughs)

GG: Now, was there a boy's dormitory nearby, too, or....

FY: Our boy's dormitory was across where is, you know, on the opposite side. So, it was quite a distance between us.

GG: But did the boys and girls get together and do things from time to time, or dances, or....

FY: No, usually when they got together was when they had social events for the school, you know. Class events or something like that. And then, oh, when they had church function, and—what else did they do? Oh, as far as individual private parties, no. It's more of a—well, when the girls and boys got together was when there's school event and church events. Other than that, there are no....

GG: And then, how did you meet your husband? Were there dating kinds of situations at all? What about—did you ever go to the movies with the boys, or....

FY: No, usually we all went. The girls, you know. All your friends would
go together. And then---they didn't date that much our time, you know, so all--well, I met my husband when we had this---dormitory---the two dormitories got together and they had this picnic down at Nāwiliwili where there's...the Wilcox's own a beach place. Papale.... chee, Papalenahoa or something like that, the name was. Anyway, I don't think that place is being used any more. And, so we had this gathering an---well, I guess, I was sitting on one side and he was on the other side. (Chuckles) I don't know how, but we somehow---I guess, you know, got going together and that was the first time we met. He worked in the library. He was a working man, so we used to---when we used to go to town, I'd drop in at the library.

GG: You started going to the library often, huh?

(Laughter)

FY: And then, of course, once we got to know each other fairly well, well, we started going, you know, to the shows and he'd take me for a ride or something like that.

GG: He had a car, then?

FY: Oh, he had, yes. His—he needed...

GG: 'Cause he was working already?

FY: Yeah.

GG: Yeah.

FY: So we went around places and took in the show. He wasn't what you call—he was shy. More on the shy type. He was rather quiet, you know, so, somehow (Laughs) I guess, when the time comes, comes naturally, I guess.

GG: And then, what? You were married in nineteen....

FY: 1926. January the 9th.

GG: How did you get married? Was it....

FY: Well, you see, I was going to school. That was my senior year, and I—he asked my dad if we could get married, but my dad didn't approve, so I was a bad girl, I guess.

(GG laughs)

FY: I just...decided I would get married, so I left school, and on the 9th, we got married at the church. But there was this lady who ran the dormitory whose name was --she's long gone already--Miss Jennie
Johnson, and she helped us in the church, you know, decoration. We just had her and a minister and one of my classmates that comes from same town and a few others came, but other than that, we didn't have any fancy church wedding. Just a simple one. At the Japanese Christian church, you know, the Japanese Christian church. And that night, we caught the boat— I think it was the Hualalai. Those days, used to have boat, have to go by boat. Well, we got on the boat and came to Honolulu. Of course, at that time, he didn't have a job, but then, we came anyway in town, that time to find a job for him. So, when we came to Honolulu, we lived with my sister-in-law down Kakaako. She was taking charge of this rental cottages, you know. Well, I wouldn't call cottages, because it was like only rooms to rent. So we stayed over there, oh, I would say, about three months or so, then his dad got very ill, and they thought he was going to be gone, so they asked us to come back. So, we went back to Kauai. Then, he helped with his father's work as a reservoir attendant until he could find something better. And, then, of course, he had to see that the father could be on his own. After that.

GG: His father was working for the plantation?

FY: At the plantation. Koloa— McBride plantation, and he was a reservoir attendant. Took care of about three reservoirs. He would have to get up extra early in the morning to open the gauge, you know, so everybody would have enough water... irrigate the cane. So he had to ride horse to his job, you know. So, we were there, and while he was doing that, I felt I should do something, so I looked around, but those days jobs are hard to get, especially for women. But then I managed to find a housemaid job for this couple that--- she was a school teacher and he was a supervisor in the cannery. Lawai Cannery. And they had a little--- they had a boy. One boy at that time, so, I used to do the housecleaning, the laundry, feed the boy, you know, take care of him. When she came home, then, I could go home.

GG: And where were you living, at this time?

FY: Lawai?

GG: With his father?

FY: His folks. So, when he finally--- father got well, my husband went to look for job and at that time, this fellow, Mr. Gordon Virgo, he was at the Makaweli Plantation.... took charge of welfare things and recreation. He was more of a YMCA man. He was good working with people. So, he was doing that, and he needed a secretary, so that's when my husband started to work with him. And he worked there... gee, I don't know exactly how many years he worked there, but, later on, he was offered the job at Lihue where Phillip Rice was a lawyer. A private lawyer. He was looking for another clerk. He had one fellow already that did all the stenographer work. So, a clerk, other minor clerk, who was--- he wanted another boy. So he applied for it and he got the job. So he was there till 1936. That's when
we came to Oahu to look for—well, he came to work for Waialua.

GG: How did he get the offer from Waialua Sugar Mill?

FY: Well, by that time, Mr. Virgo had left the Makaweli Plantation.

GG: Oh, that's right. You told me that. And he had come...

FY: And he came to Waialua. And...because he was doing this recreation and all that. Gym. Take care the gym. And he needed somebody to help him with the other part. So...he called my husband to come, because he thought at that time, of course, the salary wasn't too much, you know. Those days, only $85 a month. But he said we'll have free lodging, I mean, housing, and electricity, water, all, you know—electricity, of course, you pay for that. But water and house we would have free. And he said things were rather cheap, too, you know, those days, and he thought maybe the salary, may not be much, but, he thought it would be better for him to come. But he didn't want to leave, because he learned a lot, you know, working for the lawyer. Legal terms and all those. He was hesitant about leaving, but finally, he decided, well, we'll take a try. Phillip Rice was very nice. He said he didn't want to hold him. So, we packed and moved.

GG: So you were really brave way back then, to do the things you did in a lot of ways.

FY: Well, he's one that—I guess, he take a chance. I mean, he try, but then, of course, if there's any downfall, well, no one to blame but himself.

GG: So then when you came to Waialua, where did you live when you first came?

FY: We lived on Goodale Road.

GG: In one of the camps, or....

FY: No, right on the main highway. It's, well, they call that the Skill Camp. That's where all their people who had skilled job, like they were doing office work and things like that, they all lived in that area. So we lived right on the main highway. And it was close to his work. He could just walk to work. It was very convenient. Of course, when my boy had to go to school, those days, the plantation used to furnish a little bus for the children. Pick up plantation children. So he used to ride the bus and he used to go to school on that.

GG: Was that what they now call Haleiwa School? Is that where he went to school?

FY: Yeah. In those days, it was called Waialua. Elementary.
GG: And your husband worked with this Mr. Virgo in the recreation? Taking care of the gyms...he did the paperwork? Is that what he did?

FY: Yes, and he took charge of whatever sports they were having.

GG: And then, when did you start to work in the plantation store?

FY: He left 1940, November, to work with Mr. Virgo again. With the draft board. In the draft board department, so I went to work for the---those days it was Waialua Plantation Store. The same month, and the same year.

GG: So then, you still stayed in the same house because you were employed then?

FY: Uh huh. I was in the plantation store.

GG: And you were a clerk in the store? Is that right?

FY: A sales clerk, yes.

GG: And what were your duties, or how did you get the job? How did you....

FY: During those days, we had to---I put in an application. I wrote---sent in a letter of application for the job, and those days, when Mr. Clingensmith was the manager. So, he asked me to come and have an interview. So I went and....

GG: He was the manager of the plantation...

FY: Store. Mr. Midkiff was manager for the plantation. The whole plantation. So, I started working the next day and I worked till 1965. That's when I retired. But, I wasn't at the retiring age. I mean, you know, be able to collect any kind of retirement. But I---we had to move from the present---the plantation home. By that time, Fujiokas took over. In 1950, plantation did away with store, but just the ownership changed hands. And all those people that were there were kept, and some of them were offered plantation jobs. Those who could do clerical or other types of work, so since I didn't have cler---you know, commercial subjects of any kind, the only thing I could do was sales clerk, so, they kept me at the store.

GG: You stayed at Fujioka Store? With him, then?

FY: Mhm.

GG: I see. Do you remember what your first salary was, when you first started working there?

FY: Gee, you asked me the last time and I tried to figure it out, but I
couldn't remember. Gee....

GG: Well, we can probably find out, because the plantation has given us the different salaries...

FY: They have records. Yeah.

GG: ...for different kinds of work at different times. So, do you remember what your working conditions were like, or who did you have as a boss at that time, or....

FY: Well, as I said, Mr. Clingensmith was the boss. Then he had office staff like cashier, bookkeeper, and....the machine that they operate for making out the bills and things, but the clerks were all under one boss.

GG: Were there other women working with you, too? Or....

FY: Those days....there were a few, yes. The Portuguese woman, and Korean....I think she was there, too. And Japanese....gee, I don't know if Mrs. Koyanagi was there before I was there. I can't remember that. (Chuckles) But, anyway, there were few, because there was one dry goods department and they had a lady working there. And then, we would, of course, go from one department to another to accommodate the customer, whatever they needed, you know. Waited on them.

GG: Did the various, say, did Japanese customers come mainly to you, or did they go to anybody in the store, or....

FY: Well, we had another Japanese man, older man, you know, much older than I. He was there long time, so most of them would go to him, and then, of course, when he's busy, well, they have to depend on someone else. So, then, we waited more on Japanese. Of course, there were Filipinos. Waited on Filipinos. Much easier for them. But later on, we could manage, because they could say some simple sentences, maybe, to tell what they need and stuff. But as long as we knew what they wanted, that was simple, because then, you know, it was all in the store.

GG: Right. And it was sort of like a general store? It carried everything, or...

FY: Everything from grocery to hardware to, oh, I don't think you can---you name it. (Laughs)

GG: And they had it, huh?

FY: Yes.

GG: And then you waited on customers. Did you have other duties, too, or did you mark prices and things like that, or....
FY: The prices were marked in the back. They had a warehouseman. So, he would do all that, and then, bring out the goods, and then, of course, we fill in the shelves.

GG: Was there, like, a counter where they had cash registers or how did you...

FY: No. The counters---they had long counters on each department. The cash register was only in the front. Where the cashier would be.

GG: So the cashier took care of that part? And then, if they bought on their bango numbers, then you just...

FY: Yes. We just charge it, yeah. We had---each counter had charge machine, so we would charge and the customer take home.

GG: How would anybody know, though, if somebody was running too high a balance or something?

FY: The office always notified, you know, and they gave us a list... with all the bad accounts. That's how we would check.

GG: Oh. I think I asked you a little bit before, and I don't remember if you told me too much about how they would decide when your balance was too high. Did you have anything to do with that?

FY: No.

GG: Or do you know how it worked, or....

FY: No, the office took strict....

GG: Care of all of that. Okay. And you lived in a house on Goodale until at the time when you left?

FY: 1965. Yes.

GG: And then, did you come right to this house?

FY: No, we went to Keahipaka Lane. We were really fortunate about house. Finding, you know. It just happened that the couple that were living there had moved out and the people in the front who were our good friends, they told us, because they heard---they knew that we were looking for house. So he told us, "You better hurry up and," you know, "put your name in or make a call." So, we did it right away. And then we were able to rent the house from them.

GG: And your husband had gone with the draft board in 1940?

FY: Yeah.

GG: That was just before the War?
FY: When the War came, he was there for little while, and then they
had orders that all Japanese ancestry people working for draft
board has to be let out. So he got—he had to leave the job.

GG: He wasn't American citizen or he was...

FY: He is. He is. And he's not a dual citizen. Just, you know,
American citizen. And so, he had to look for job, and those
days, it was so hard to find, because it was wartime and aliens,
you know, their government Japanese, see (Chuckles) so, all Japanese
people were not able to get government job. But he tried, kept
trying, and he would—he found this job with this—what did he say
it was, now?

END OF SIDE ONE
SIDE TWO.

FY: ...because he was working for the draft board, so that time, I guess,
they must have questioned him there, because they didn't find anything,
you know, with him, so...but---so he finally found this job but the
midnight shift. Driving a car with those blue lights?

GG: Yes. (Laughs)

FY: Oh, boy! This is just crawl to his job and then when he went, he
did some, I think in those days, he had to do manual job, because
anything, he said, he wasn't too picky about work as long as you have
something to do.

GG: And he drove to town...

FY: No, no. He drove to Wahiawa. He worked there for a while. And
after that....he found....wait, I better call him in, I think.

(Husband, Allen Yokomoto(AY) enters)

AY: After they transfer, I did....

FY: Chang's place? Out at Chang's place? Work in the motor?

AY: Oh yeah, work in the motor.

FY: You went work in and after that, you went to Wilikina Motors?
Leilehua Motors?

AY: April Leilehua Motors.

FY: Now, when did you start tire recapping?

AY: Nineteen....oh, then, I went from Leilehua Motor....

FY: Oh, 24 hour service.

AY: 24 hour service. Waikiki.
FY: Then you went to tire recapping. That was the last place?
AY: Yeah.
GG: And then where did he end up....
FY: After he left that Territorial Motors for tire recapping--Territorial Motors? (Addresses AY) They called you back at the draft board?
AY: I went the draft board....1954.
GG: And then he finished out his...
FY: He went to the draft board. They called him back. I mean, all those who worked for the draft board originally were called back. But he was called rather late, you know. Some of them were called...
GG: Almost like ten years or so later, yeah?
FY: Yeah. Well, they needed a traveling clerk, you see, so they called him to come in and he's worked there since fifty....
GG: Four, I think he said?
FY: '51 or '54, him not sure. Anyway, '54, and then he went to---(To AY) from there you went to soil conservation?
AY: Soil conservation, federal.
FY: To federal.
AY: And I stayed there until....I retired.
FY: Yeah, 1969. He was 67 years old when he retired, you see. So he's been with the soil conservation till then. And then, he was retired at the age of 67. He wanted to work till 70, but, you know how government, when they want to push you out, eh.
GG: Yeah.
FY: They give you all kind of option, so (Laughs) he had to leave. Well, maybe he was tired of riding the bus already, you know. All those years, he took the bus.
GG: And that was into town, then? It's a long haul, on the bus. (Chuckles)
FY: All day. Leave here early in the morning. He used to leave about 5:30, 6:30, huh?
GG: And that was before the freeways were all finished, too, so...
FY: Yes. So the road...

GG: ...it was an extra long ride.

FY: At first, he used to go with his car, but then—-and he had passengers, you know, those days, you had to take the...

GG: Carpool? Yeah.

FY: Carpool, so he had passengers, so that helped, but later on, it was getting too much of a hassle. But parking situation is so hard to get, and you know, and so far away, so he decided he'd take the bus. So he left home on his car and he went to Wahiawa and left his car by the depot. Then he caught the bus. He used to do that. But still, he used to come home about 6 o'clock, you know.

GG: Yeah. Going back to the wartime, now, you continued to work in the store during the...

FY: I was there, right through till '65, January.

GG: And how was the community reaction to the Japanese people here?

FY: Oh, was—-well, some of them, I think, the first generation were more affected than local people. Because they feel that everybody else would pick on them, and, of course, those days, the Filipinos, they kind of rough on all the Japanese people. And they were lucky, because Filipinos, although they're considered Oriental like, hm, yeah? But since they been Philippines, they took the jobs that the Japanese people had. And, so, that was kind of bad. But as a whole, community-wise, it wasn't that bad. The people were, you know, they....what could you say, got along. Managed. No really hard feelings of any kind.

GG: Yeah. And your boy wasn't of draft age, quite. Not...

FY: No, he wasn't. He was too young. My husband offered—-those days they were taking volunteers for the 442 and 100, so he volunteered and the funny part is they took his physical and he passed, but they told him, "Oh, you're too old."

(GG chuckles)

FY: He was 35 at that time, you see, so they said, "You're too old for it." So he said, "Why did they take my physical and everything if they just going to....like that?" He was one willing to go. So he said, "Well, they don't want more, keep on working."

(Laughter)

FY: And then this next war....
GG: The Korean War?

FY: Yeah, the Korean and this... my son was going to school. University at this time, so--- and he was married, so they didn't take him. In those days, they didn't take married people. They had the child, too, so... he didn't get in. I was hoping somebody in my family would be... you know, but we were unfortunate, and yet we were...

GG: Fortunate, possibly, too. Right.

FY: ... yeah, fortunate, yeah. So he went through to the University and finished, so we still have him. (Laughs)

GG: Yeah. (Chuckles) When he was growing up, now, what were his experiences here in the community, or... you know, as far as going to school and how he got along with you and....

FY: Oh, we never had any problem, except that I used to work and my husband works, so naturally, nobody is home, so he used to play with his neighbors--- I mean, friends who lived in the camp, and they used to come and get him and he used to go. And naturally, will forget time, you know. And lot of times he's not home when I get home. So when he was going to high school, the same thing, so he went until sophomore, tenth grade, at Waialua High School. Then, we wanted him to go to Iolani School, so we made several applications. Even before he was in the tenth grade, we asked if we could get him in. But those days... they didn't take too many because they had dormitories. And day scholars, too. So, we kept writing---he kept writing, 'cause we wanted him to be under some kind of supervision, you see. Finally, they notified that he was accepted. You know, they would accept him. But, of course, passing the test. After all that, they will accept him. So he went to take the test and he was--- passed through, so they accepted him, so he went in from junior year, and he stayed at the dormitory and he used to come home once a week. Stay over Saturday and go back on Sundays, and then during his senior years, well, there are more things that he did, you know, because he got--- he was involved in track. He loved basketball from the time he was a little boy. So... there are more times that day to spend at dorm... so, he wouldn't come home. Only certain vacations, like that, and then holidays. Then he would come home. So we used to go into town every Sunday. My husband and I would go take his laundry, you know, dirty laundry bag and clean laundry bag to him, and then, of course, we made food. You know, they're always hungry, and they want to eat something, so we used to make Japanese riceballs, and, you know, things like that, and all kinds of things we thought the kids would enjoy. We made enough so that his friends...

GG: Could share. Right.
FY: Yeah. Mmm. So they looked forward to that, and he finished Iolani.

(Husband (AY) comes in.)

GG: (To AY) You had enough, huh?

AY: 'Nuff. Two hours of it. (Chipping golf balls in yard).

(Laughter)

FY: So by the time he was high school, he was playing basketball and I said, track. And he turned out for baseball, but baseball wasn't exactly his game, but they asked him to turn out so he did. And then, he went to University. At the University, he made pretty good in these track events and he turned out for basketball and he was on the team. He was a skinny, lanky fellow. But, as I said, his first love was basketball. Always playing. From the time he was a----we had right above the door, he would nail a can, at first. That's how he started. With tennis balls in. Then as he got older, he put wire, big wire...outside on the garage. And finally, he got him a rim basketball. He would play with the father, you know. So...and he used to go and practice all by himself down the gym.

GG: In Waialua?

FY: Yeah. He loved his---that much he loved his basketball game, so....

GG: When you first started working, he was what? About eight, or....

FY: Uh....1940. He's 29. Forty. 11. Fifth grade about.

GG: So, he was already old enough to kind of be on his own. You didn't have to have somebody come and stay with him, so....

FY: No. He used to go to Japanese school after English school. That was a waste of time.

(Laughter)

GG: But you tried to continue the customs?

FY: Yeah. That way, he would be in school that much longer, and then...out of mischief, you see, so he went to Japanese school, but it just was waste of time.

(GG laughs)

FY: He doesn't know a thing even now. But, it was alright. I mean, then, in wartime, they completely cut out the Japanese schooling, eh, so, he was happy.
(Laughter)

GG: How did he find in school during the wartime? Did they give him a bad time in school, at all or....

FY: Oh, you mean the kids? Being Japanese? No, because his friends were Japanese. He had Korean friend, Hawaiian friend, Portuguese friend, you know. So, actually, he was a friendly boy, so he never had a problem making friends. He's always been that way. So, he was fortunate. I mean, nobody picked on him, like that.

GG: And he married a Japanese girl, or....

FY: Yes, they met at the University. They're same age. She's from Maui, but she was studying at the University dorm, you know, those dorms.

GG: Okay. And tell me some of the, maybe, Japanese customs that you've tried to keep with your family down through the years. Your eating habits, do you eat mostly Japanese food, or....

FY: No, we'd eat all, mixed eating, you know, food. On special occasions, yes, I would prepare Japanese food, you know, like New Year's and Boy's Day or Girl's Day. They will have certain food, you know. My father was a very strict man, so he brought up quite strict disciplinary, you know, way. And so, I had a tendency to dig into that, too, somehow, you know, although he's not. He's more American. (Refers to husband)

(Laughter)

FY: Of course, times have changed. Everything is, you know, with this generation, you know, everybody's more Americanized than anything else, so....

GG: What about your recreation? What did you folks do for enjoyment or fun, you know, after you moved to Waialua?

FY: Oh, we used to go to town every Saturday right after he got through with his work. We would go to town. We had friends, you know, and then, we stayed overnight till Sunday. Come back, and then, in between when they have sports of any kind or school sports or--we would go. We were always sport minded. But he loves sports and I do, too. Especially football. Basketball. Baseball, no. It's a little too slow, like, for us. Although we'd watch sometimes, but then, not to say that we'd go spend the money to go see a baseball.

GG: And the track, too. You said your son was...

FY: Track, yes.

GG: What were his special events, or....
FY: Daddy, what was his...dash?
AY: Who?
FY: Sonny.
AY: He was a hurdler. Hurdler and a javelin throw.
FY: That's the University, though.
AY: Yeah.
FY: He ran short distance.
AY: No, hurdling.
FY: Just---he didn't do any running?
AY: He didn't do any sprinting. Or running.
GG: I have a daughter that's in track, too, so I'm really interested in that.
AY: Yeah, girls go into that now.
GG: She's in the 440 and the 880---her individual events and also the relays, so....
AY: Those are, you know, need lot of stamina. You know, 440, especially.
GG: Yeah. So, did you folks play cards, or...
FY: Oh, yes. We play cards. (Laughs)
AY: After we came here, we didn't play.
FY: We played little while, but not the way when we were on Kauai. We'd play till, you know, and Sunday nights we play.
AY: Saturday night we play because...
FY: Sunday morning, we're through. (Laughs) About 5, 6 o'clock in the morning, then everybody go home to their homes, you know.
GG: What kind of card games did you...
FY: Trumps and things like that. No...
AY: We didn't gamble.
FY: We didn't gamble. No poker or anything like that.
GG: What about hanafuda, you play that, or....

FY: Yes, I play more. He didn't play hanafuda too much. So I played hanafuda. Then, of course, we went to the movies.

GG: How was the main way you got your news when you first came here? Radio or newspaper or talking with friends or, how...

FY: Yes, we had radio. And....

AY: Newspaper.

FY: Newspapers, we always had. We even had Kauai newspaper mailed to us at that time for a while. And then...

GG: Way back then? Because a lot of people said they couldn't afford the newspapers at that time, so....

FY: No, we did. So....we kept up on news with the paper.

GG: Did you listen to the radio a lot, too, or....

FY: Those days, yes, because no TV, uh huh. So we would listen to the TV--radio. Those days they had those soap operas on the radio, too, so we listen to certain operas.

GG: "One Man's Family," and..

(Laughter)

FY: Well, especially "Ma Perkins" and, you know, all those old stories. Gee, I can't even remember the names already.

(GG laughs)

GG: That's--my own kids say to me now, "How did you ever have any fun? You didn't have TV!"

(Laughter)

FY: Oh, yes. Now days you have TV. Especially for us, it's really good, you know, because in the evenings we can't go out at all. He doesn't drive nights at all. Unless someone would come and pick us up. Or my son says he'll pick us up.

GG: Do you have other family here at all, too, on this island or in Waialua area or....

FY: No. Not in Waialua, but my son folks live in Sunset. They're the closest.
GG: Does your husband have family?

FY: His relatives are all in town.

GG: Many left back on Kauai at this point or....

FY: He has two brothers on Kauai. That's all. So this Yokomotos are all one clan, you know.

GG: I see. And then, when did you get your first car? Of course, he had one on Kauai, you said, 'cause he was working, like that.

FY: He always had car, yeah. We brought the car over from Kauai over here. (To AY) We came on the Terra-plane, right?

AY: Yeah, they had Essex Terra-plane when we came over.

FY: (Laughs) Those days, they had Essex Terra-plane. We came with that.

GG: What is that?

FY: Terra-plane. (Laughs) It's an automobile. (Laughs)

AY: They don't make 'em any more.

FY: That's outmoded already. But that's what we used to have.

AY: That's the Atsun Motorcar Company.

GG: But you came on a boat from...

AY: Yeah, came on a boat.

FY: Came on the boat, and then we had to wait for the car to arrive, you know, later on.

AY: Next day.

FY: Then we had---after that, we had a Plymouth.

AY: Yeah, we changed to Plymouth. I change quite a bit.

FY: We had the Plymouth, then we had the Buick. Second hand Buick. We didn't have...

AY: During the War, you couldn't buy any car. Gas ration.

GG: You could only have so much?

AY: Well, I was working, by that time, the tire recapping plant was on defense contract, so ours can....I remember. But you had to....not share the ride, but you had to carry passengers.
FY: Carpool.

AY: You know, people move in town. The rest of the War, I think, was five gallons a month or so. So all the haoles in Manoa with Buicks and Cadillacs, they were selling their car.

GG: For cheap, huh? (Laughs)

AY: Cheap. Yeah, cheap, because they can't move the car.

FY: Get the gas, so...(Laughs)

AY: No more gas. Then those second hand cars began to sell at...oh, went sky high. 1941 Chevrolet was selling for about eleven forty-five. Used.

GG: What about while you were at the plantation? They had the '49, I think or '46 big strike when unions came in. How did that affect you or what were you doing at the store, or....

FY: Oh, yes. Well, oh, when we were working for the plantation...

AY: You had to join the union.

FY: Yeah. When we were working for the plantation, we were in the union. So when the strike was on, we used to have meetings at the camp. There was a big camp in--where they had all officials there. The members who would get together and plan what to do for entertainment and things like that. And those who could go out to fish go out fishing so that they bring the food over here. We had food over there.

AY: Oh, yeah, get your food.

FY: See, so we---and then, they raised the vegetables. Victory Garden, they called it. (Laughs) Yeah, so....we had quite a spell of it, and we used to go around to see if anything's out of hand or something like that. Day and night, they had at this club where we had the meetings. We had the entertainment. They would plan a certain time to have a certain kind of program, you know.

GG: Do you remember what kind of programs, or....

FY: Oh, we had all the people who could, you know, have any kind of talent, would perform. sing, dance, whatever. And then, later, they had the boxing teams come in, too, so the people had distractions instead of being constantly reminded of the strike.

GG: And your husband, of course, was not working in plantation, so it probably didn't affect you as directly as maybe---you know, in terms of loss of wages or...
FY: Yeah, that part was okay.
GG: And the women participated in the meetings and things, too?
FY: Yes, they do the kitchen work.
GG: And how long---do you remember about how long it lasted?
FY: Gee, about three months, huh? We had---everyday we had meeting. Those who couldn't come during the day would go evenings.
GG: And the union leaders would come and talk, or....
FY: Mhm. Mhm.
GG: And what was the community reaction at that time, or....
FY: Well, they were all working for higher wages. So until that was settled, they would...otherwise, they didn't get out of hand, you know, at all. Most time.
GG: And then, when they converted everything to cash, and you had to start paying rent and things like that, how did they work that, or....
FY: A lot of people had to adjust to slowly pay their back bills because they were out of work for---of course, some of them, those who had money saved were able to keep up. Some of them were more unfortunate, though, they had to go keep on paying until they caught up with it, but it took quite a while before they did that.
GG: And was the store closed during the time of the strike, or...
FY: No, the store was open.
GG: And did you work at the store during the strike, or.....
FY: No, we didn't---chee, I...
GG: Or did the lunas come in and help do things like that, or....
FY: No....I think some of us did work. But whatever we made, we had to share, you know, with the ones that never did any work. So, I don't think I ever stayed home from work. We did go to work, but then we had to turn in part of our earnings to help the union members, you know, those who didn't.
GG: Did you usually have a vegetable garden of your own when you were working, or did you have time to have your own vegetable garden in your yard, or....
FY: We are not the planters, to....(Laughs) We did all the marketing for our vegetables.
(Laughter)

FY: We're not the farming type, so you don't see anything. (Laughs)

GG: It looks nice, though.

FY: Farming or...

(Laughter)

FY: Well, at least, we try to pull the weeds so that it'll look nice. Like yesterday, we finish the back part, you know, whatever corner we had over there. Lot of koas growing so we cleaned that out.

GG: They take over in a hurry, too, don't they?

FY: Oh, yes. So we had to dig it all up.

GG: What about during the time you were with the plantation, in terms of health, did you have to use the hospital, pay or...

FY: Yes. Hospital, I went to the hospital. I had surgery during the wartime. And my son had an accident. He was playing with someone, and the person threw a panax hedge, and you know, that thing was kind of slant, and...

GG: Oh, yeah.

FY: ...threw and it missed. Just cut his eye open over here. Like lid. So, we had to take him to the hospital.

AY: Did we pay for services? Chee, don't remember now.

FY: Those days, no. Medication...private rooms, we paid part of. Then, there was another time when my son was playing baseball with his friend at the...

AY: And he collided with one...and he got hurt.

FY: ...elementary school. They both went for the same ball. And the other fellow was shorter than my son, you see, so when he crashed into him, he bumped his nose and he broke his nose. And so, he went in the hospital for that and later on they didn't do a good job at the hospital over here so we had to take him to specialist in town. And then he had to rebreak the thing---nose and then...

AY: He had to reset the thing.

FY: Yes, he had to crack it all over.

GG: Oh boy.
FY: Reset it, and so he had quite a time of that.

GG: But the hospital had complete hospital services, but...

FY: Oh, well, the plantation one, yes. But outside, when we went to the specialist, we had to pay on our own. When I had surgery...I don't remember if we paid--I think we had to pay the difference in the private room because I was in a private room, so...but other than that, I don't remember if medication we paid or not. So, in a way, hospital, the plantation took care...so that helped, too.

GG: Now, could your husband use the hospital, too, during the time you were working there, or...

AY: I think I had to...

FY: He could use, but he would have to pay.

AY: I had to pay. Just like an out pat—I mean, nonplantation. Outsider.

GG: But after the union came, did they have hospital plan for employees and their spouses, so....

FY: Oh, yeah.

GG: And what about, now, the shipping strike in 1949. Did that affect you folks at all, or....

FY: Well, we couldn't get lot of things, so that was a problem, you know. But then, they managed.

GG: The store wasn't able to get certain things to...

FY: Lot of things, yes, they couldn't get.

GG: Yeah.

FY: And being so far away, too, we ran out of things. So, naturally, rice is the most important food for all the people in the plantation.

GG: Everybody, right.

FY: So they would store, you know. People would hoard, and some of them would have more than what others had, so that made quite a problem. And certain can goods.

GG: And by the time you came here in '36, they already had electricity and indoor toilets, right?

FY: Oh, they had, yes.

GG: In the house.
FY: They had everything.

GG: And your electricity bill, you said you paid for.

FY: Yeah, electricity...

GG: That was like a dollar a month or something, I think, or....

FY: (To AY) Oh, plantation electricity we were using, yeah? Those days. Not Hawaiian Electric? Or was it from...

AY: I think was plantation power.

FY: Plantation power so we didn't pay, eh.

AY: We paid.

FY: We paid the electricity?

AY: Yeah, little bit.

FY: But not...the same as outside, yeah.

GG: Not like today. (Laughs)

AY: Oh, I was getting....I paid little bit, because....

FY: You salary man.

AY: Salary. You on salary. Yeah, we paid for, little bit, but...

FY: Water was free.

AY: ...haole workers, I think, was free. Free---they used to give us wood.

FY: Firewood.

AY: And furnace. Outside.

FY: 'Cause some of them had heaters outside.

AY: We had heaters, like that.

GG: Your kitchen was already inside, those days, too.

FY: Yes. Kitchen, bathroom, everything was inside.

AY: But the ones in the camp had, what you call it, were outside, eh.

FY: Outside toilet, yeah. People in the camp, they were outside toilet.

GG: Still at that time?
AY: Usually, that's community bath house, then. They had community bath house. As I said, we lived in the Skill Camp, so everything would be up to date. Convenience of toilet and bathroom, kitchen, everything.

GG: You had electric stove in those days?

FY: Electric stove, refrigerator.

GG: Oh, refrigerator, too?

FY: Oh, yeah.

AY: Yeah, we had.

FY: We bought the refrigerator...

GG: Not icebox? Refrigerator?

FY: No. We brought the refrigerator from Kauai. A small Hot...

AY: No, we had a regular four cubits. Small one. About half the size of the one we have now.

GG: But, lot of people then, I think, still had iceboxes.

FY: They did, yes.

GG: And the iceman had to come.

FY: He came.

(Laughter)

FY: We must be an odd couple. I bet you find that we don't remember lot of things whereas other people could really recall the past more....

AY: Because I jumped around.

GG: Well, everybody's story is individual, you know, and as we get more, then, we'll be able to see if there are trends or patterns and things like that. But....

FY: Someone asked me once, "How come you don't remember?" I said, "I don't know. I just don't remember." You know.

AY: Moving. Changed job so often. It's pitiful.

(Laughter)

FY: We should have made notations before.
AY: You know, when I file the Civil Service, what do you call, examination questionnaire, you know....

GG: They don't have room for you to put all the jobs.

AY: Yeah, they didn't have room, and I didn't remember. (Laughs)

FY: He had to have several sheets extra.

(GG laughs)

GG: What about---do you recall anything during the time when they had the Red Scare, Jack Hall, and some of, you know, where everybody was---I guess, there was a lot of fear, because they were saying people were Communist and things like that. I think it was in late '40s and early '50s. Do you.....

AY: Yeah, yeah.

FY: I don't remember having any kind. No.

GG: And what about statehood time? Did that have any effect on you or do you feel like it somehow changed the community or changed your life?

FY: Well, I think it changed everybody's life, I'm sure, you know, but then, other than that, well, maybe some people say was better if we had stayed as a, you know, city and county instead of a state.

AY: Territory, you mean.

FY: So, you can....well, there are both sides. Good points on both sides, you know, being a territory or a state, so, it's hard to say, you know.

GG: Yeah. Well, I think, unless there's anything else you want to add, that just about covers the ballpark, so....

FY: I wish I was more thorough about giving you all the history, but there's so many things you can't remember. I mean....

GG: Is there anything special that stands out, or, you know, a significant event?

FY: No. We really don't have that kind of (Laughs) thing going for us, so we're real homebodies.

GG: Except you really can't say that with your reunion and your anniversary and everything that's happened this year. Those are pretty special.

FY: Well, that's something real special. And having a 50th anniversary. Both of them at the same year---on the same year. I think that's really something, you know.
GG: That's something that doesn't happen to very many people. That's for sure.

FY: I don't think so.

(Laughter)

FY: So, I feel kind of honored. (Laughs) Told my classmates, I said, "This is a real special year, because we had both fifty years events, you know." And they said, "Oh, you already....?" I said, "Sure, 1926, I got married." And then we have the reunion this year. Something extra.

GG: Something to remember for the rest of your days.

FY: I don't think there's any of my classmate that any of them had 50th anniversary yet. Because no one mentioned anything. And I didn't mention to everybody, but a few of my friends know about it, you know.

GG: Yeah. Well, I think that's about....it.

END OF INTERVIEW
WAIALUA & HALEIWA
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