BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: LOWELL TAKAHASHI, retired Post Master

Lowell Gunichi Takahashi, Japanese, was born in Waialua on August 12, 1912. His parents, immigrants from Japan, made shoyu, owned a small store in Haleiwa, and raised pigs.

Lowell graduated from Mid-Pacific Institute and attended Cannon Business College for one year. His first job was as a service station attendant in Wahiawa. Later, he got a job at the Waialua Post Office and stayed there for 36 years, retiring as a Post Master.

In 1951, Lowell married in a Buddhist ceremony. Since his retirement, he enjoys playing on the Kahuku Golf Course. Wahiawa has been his home for the past six years.
This is an interview with Mr. Lowell Takahashi at his home in Wahiawa. Today is July 22nd, 1976. Mr. Takahashi, thank you for allowing me to come for this interview. Would you tell us a little bit about yourself, please? For example, where were you born?

I was born in Waialua in 1912. Practically I was born and raised in that district there.

Where did your parents come from?

They came from Japan.

Do you know when they came to Hawaii?

(Laughs) Now let me see. I believe it's about the latter part of the 1800s.

Oh, I remember! When we talked about it before, about 1895 to 1900. Why did your parents come to Hawaii? Did they ever tell you?

No. I guess, adventure, pioneer life. Well, looking for a better life, I guess.

And where was their first home in Hawaii?

Well, I don't know about my mother, but my father, I'm very sure he came under the sugar contract at Waianae Plantation or something like that. Then he moved down to Waialua district.

What kind of work did he do in Waialua?

Well, for the time being, he was working for the plantation. Then he quit that. He was in the shoyu business, make his own shoyu and peddle around.

Do you have any idea how he made the shoyu?

There was a big vat. It's made out of beans, so I think he boils the beans or cook the beans and put 'em in big tub. Here, you have a big vat.
press. Just press down the beans and squeeze the juice from the beans.

NC: You were still living in Waialua when he was in the shoyu business?

LT: Yeah.

NC: But were you living on the plantation?

LT: At that time, no. I was only born in the plantation camp. Then we moved up to just the outskirt of the plantation life there. Into the town. Well, so called. Two, three houses, they had town, eh.

(Laughter)

NC: Oh, you mean, it was that small?

LT: Yeah, Haleiwa was. Even today, it's a small town. But wasn't a plantation town, or camp or anything like that. It was outside of the jurisdiction of the plantation.

So many years, he made shoyu. Then he bought a small store in Haleiwa town, and on the side, he used to raise pigs. He had about anywhere from 75 to one hundred pigs, adult kind. So that was his job, I guess.

NC: Did he sell the pigs?

LT: Yeah.

NC: Did he ever butcher them and sell the meat...

LT: No, no. Just raise the pigs and he sold it to this...they used to come and buy, so I think these people, they buy and they butcher the thing and then, maybe they sell it to the butcher shops, I guess.

NC: This was after the store?

LT: Yeah. He was running the small little store and...

NC: And the piggery at the same time?

LT: My mother was helping with the store while he was out in the piggery farm there. Or vice versa. My mother and I used to go down to the piggery farm, and clean the place up or feed the pigs.

NC: What did you used to feed the pigs?

LT: Mostly slops. We used to go town there. House to house. And then, the old Haleiwa Hotel was kind of a thing there those days, so we used to have lot of slops from the Haleiwa Hotel.

NC: Did you have to pay for the slops?

LT: Now, I know, you have to pay for it, but those days was free.
NC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

LT: I have sisters, no brothers. I have nine sisters. (Laughs)

NC: Are you the oldest or the youngest?

LT: I'm right in between. Just about the center. I'm the only boy.

NC: Did the girls help with this work?

LT: No, not too much. The piggery farm was just maybe between my father, my mother, and I. Just about the three of us. We used to run the farm there. Besides the pigs, we had chickens, we had ducks. You know, the old country farm.

NC: So this was part of your own food, too?

LT: Well, could be, because the chickens and the eggs. Of course, the pigs, we sold them out.

NC: Did the Japanese in those days eat pork?

LT: Yes, they used to eat. I remember when I was a kid, my father used to send me to the butcher shop and buy a dollar--well, you don't buy by two, three pounds. Those days, you say, "Give me a dollar's worth of pork." Or "Fifty cents worth of pork," or something like that.

NC: Yeah. I don't have a prejudice. I just wondered how styles of eating changed.

LT: Yeah, it did. It's interesting, those days. Now, today, you go to the supermarket, everything is all packaged up.

NC: So, kids may not even know that chops come from a pig. But in those days, if the girls didn't help with these activities, what was expected of the girls?

LT: Well, mostly, I guess, work at home. Cleaning the house or cooking, washing or things like that.

NC: How big a house or how many rooms did you have?

LT: Oh, it was a old shack. What I mean is old shack is, those days, houses were mostly built with one by twelve rough board. You see---got some old houses down the plantation right now. No paint. But only thing you do with the outside of the wall is to whitewash the wall. That's about it.

NC: So, the girls, then, helped your mother with the housework?

LT: Mostly with the housework.

NC: How did they clean the house? I mean, now, it's vacuum cleaners. What did they use in those days?
LT: Just broom. Sweep it out, I guess.

NC: What kind of furniture did your parents have?

LT: In those days, we didn't have any of these modern furniture or what is Western furniture. Maybe, you have parlor. We just have one small, low table. That's about all. No chairs or anything of that sort. In the kitchen, you had kind of big table there, and then, chair or two. Mostly, it was benches. No zabuton or anything those days.

Some of the houses I know, even the kitchen, it wasn't floored with board. It was just solid dirt. They just sprinkle water everyday and sweep, and that thing comes so hard and packed, it's just like a cement or something. Concrete. But, no floors. Lot of the houses were like that in the old days.

NC: So then, the girl had to know how to pack it down, huh?

LT: Yeah, I guess so.

NC: If you had no zabutons, or anything, how about the bedrooms? Were they Japanese style or Western style?

LT: Well, it was Japanese style.

NC: Could you describe Japanese style of those days?

LT: You have these futon. They had two types of futon, I guess. One is to cover yourself, and one is to put it down on the floor for you to sleep on. Just like a mattress. That was it. Then the later years, we made a house in back of this old house. Then we got beds.

NC: Were the futons bought at a store or were they made at home?

LT: Well, mostly it was made in those days. The women--(learned) from their mothers--used to make.

NC: Your mother knew how to make...

LT: Yeah, the futon. They had that cotton and...

NC: Did it take a special skill to make them?

LT: Well, I don't think so, because they weren't making any fancy things like what you see in the stores. It was a matter of just putting the cotton between two cloth, and maybe, stitch everywhere.

NC: Did your sisters learn to make them?

LT: They used to help, but I doubt it if they know how to make...

NC: Then, after, when you built a new house, where did the furniture come from?
LT: Chee, I don't know where they bought it, but I guess there in a store. You know these old iron beds. Had a chair or two in our room.

NC: Did those beds come with mattresses?

LT: Yes, with Western mattresses.

NC: Did the town have electricity?

LT: Yes, we had electricity. At the beginning, no. When I was a small kid, well, we use gas lamps or lantern or whatever it is.

NC: You remember the gas lamps?

LT: Yes. It was a dangerous thing to fool around with. (Laughs)

NC: Oh, were they? How about lighting on the streets. Were there streetlights or street gaslamps or what?

LT: No, was streetlight. The streetlight came into the town. The electricity came into the town. Every home was, well, they had the electrical lights and the street was streetlights. That is when I was grammar grade. I'm talking about the grammar grade when I say "young." The only thing was no electricity so we didn't have electrical appliances. Only thing is mostly oil stove, lamps, and outside wood stove.

They make these stoves from mud and dirt and straw. And then they make it into a clay or something and make a stove. They used to burn wood to cook your rice, or...of course, the oil stove is a small thing, so.

NC: Was more cooking done inside the house or outside the house?

LT: The wood stove was under the house in the shade. So, they had a place for just cook that rice. It was protected.

NC: But it was not inside the house?

LT: No, not inside the house. It's outside.

NC: About how old were you when the electricity came?

LT: Maybe before I was ten years old, I guess. Maybe seven, eight years.

NC: So, maybe 1920 or....

LT: About or before that, I guess. It was a great occasion then. (Laughs)

NC: Oh, you remember it?

LT: Yeah, when the thing came here.

NC: Do you remember how your house got connected to a source of electricity?
LT: That I don't remember. Only thing I know is those wiring is kind of different. You know, those things where the wires hang down from the ceiling and then you have your lamp there.

NC: Did they lead from the house to a post or something?

LT: Yeah, I guess so. No, they had a main line coming to the house. Then you have that thing connected.

NC: You mean the thing that held the light bulb? The fixture was also hanging...

LT: Yeah, you know, just hanging from the ceiling by the wire. And then, they had a reflector or something, and just a bulb in it. The very old fashioned lights. I don't think so you can find those things any more.

NC: No, if you find them, you'll find they're an antique now. Where did you go to elementary school?

LT: In Waialua.

NC: Do you remember what you used to study there, what they tried to teach the kids in those days?

LT: Mostly, it was grammar, arithmetic and things like that. Reading and writing, those things. I remember arithmetic mostly because 'as the worse subject I hate to... even right today, I hate the thing so. Anything with figures.

Those days I was in Haleiwa, the elementary school was about two miles away. From the Waialua Sugar Mill, the camps to the school, it was about two or three miles away. Some of them (camps) are further up. We didn't have any buses or cars or anything like that. We used to walk to school. If the rain or shine, you just walk down to school.

NC: How about lunch? Where did you eat lunch?

LT: Well, they had school lunch. But the majority of them used to take their own lunch. Once in a while we used to go to the cafeteria. Those days, lunch was five cents. Of course, no milk and things like that. No frills. Just the plate.

NC: What kind of lunch would they serve?

LT: Well, they had stew and things like that.

NC: It was a hot lunch, too?

LT: Yeah, hot lunch.

NC: Do you remember any of the teachers?
LT: Yes, I still do, some of them. Let's see. They were living in the community. Practically all of them used to live in the school cottage. Right now, you have cars, so, they commute back and forth. But most of them was in a school cottage. Oh, just a few was maybe outside.

NC: They lived in the community, but were they local people?

LT: Yes, those was the locals. Then, we had from the outside was from the Mainland. Of course, few of these locals used to live in the cottage too, but most of the outsiders, what I call Mainland teachers, they used to live in cottage.

NC: Were there more outsiders or locals?

LT: I think it was more outsiders those days, because the only thing you had was Normal School. In those days, to be a teacher, to get a degree in teaching.

NC: So, the teachers from the Mainland were maybe college graduates and not just Normal School graduates?

LT: That, I wouldn't know.

NC: No, I was just wondering if it was obvious that there was a difference like that?

LT: No.

NC: Do you remember any of the children being naughty in school? I won't ask you if you were naughty. (Laughs)

LT: Well, I was naughty, too. We used to get spanking.

NC: Who spanked?

LT: If you're naughty to the extreme, then you was spanked with a ruler or the pointer or something like that.

NC: The blackboard pointer?

LT: Yeah. Or let us stay after school and write so many hundred times certain words or phrases. Those days, I think they were really dedicated that they will stick by you till 3 o'clock in the afternoon or 4 o'clock until you did your assigned duty or task.

NC: Until you understood your lesson?

LT: Yeah.

NC: If you were naughty and you got spanked in school, did you tell your parents about it?

LT: No, we never. Those days, we never did cry. (Laughs)
NC: Was that to spare your parents or to spare yourself another punishment?

LT: Well, I guess, to me, it was a shame to tell the parents that I got licking, so I just shut up, and nobody knew about it.

NC: Suppose some friend told his parents, how would the parents react?

LT: I think they'll say, "Oh, well, maybe, good for you. You was naughty. You got the licking. You deserve it." I'm pretty sure that's the attitude they'll take. (Laughs)

NC: You went to Waialua through the eighth grade?

LT: Right through.

NC: Then, where did you go after that?

LT: To MPI. (Mid-Pacific Institute)

NC: And how did you choose to go to MPI?

LT: At those days, I think, this MPI Chorale group or somebody used to come around to the eighth graders. Sing and advertise themself, I guess. We knew couple of boys from the district was going to MPI. In those days, I think, if you bring in a new student, I think, you were given so much credit toward your tuition.

NC: What was tuition in those days?

LT: It was $225 a year. Boarding and everything. That was big money those days.

NC: Was that a sacrifice for your family?

LT: It was.

NC: Was that only for boys, then, the school, or was it boys and girls?

LT: Boys and girls.

NC: Did your sisters go through Waialua Elementary?

LT: Yes.

NC: Did any of them want to continue?

LT: No, they weren't given a chance. So, maybe, it was financially hard on the parents. I being the only boy, they said, "Well, let that guy have his education."

NC: With some families they did decide it would be the boys, because the girls could marry an educated man. Then, you were the first one to go in your family, or did the girls go to Waialua High School?
LT: One of them, I think, went to Leilehua High. One to Waialua High.

NC: Was it possible for the girls to get jobs with an eighth grade education?

LT: Well, those days, I'm very sure the only jobs they got was house servant, work for some family and something like that. Not in the office as a bookkeeper or clerk or... no, no. I doubt it.

NC: Were the Japanese girls expected to become household helpers? Was there any prejudice?

LT: No prejudice. Well, they had certain woman's job. But mostly it was, in those days, even a clerk or bookkeeper, they used to hire men, I guess. That was a trend. Why I say that is three of my sisters, they had that--- in those days, Mutual Telephone Company. Not Hawaiian Tel (Telephone). But they had a substation in Haleiwa. So, they used to work as operator where they hire nothing but women for operators. Then one of them came into town and she worked for a dentist helper. So, there was just a few job that was available to women those days. Most of them was household work.

NC: Then, back to MPI. What were the subjects?

LT: I took up bookkeeping.

NC: You who hated numbers?

LT: Yeah.

(Laughter)

LT: Algebra was worse, so, I rather take... one plus one is much easier than figuring out the x, y, z, or square root of the thing.

NC: That's very true. Now that was only a high school level, which in those days was a lot to achieve a high school education. So, I'm not knocking it. Were the courses enough to equip you to be a bookkeeper?

LT: I would say yes. Like, in my case now, I took bookkeeping. The first year, of course, it was general things. And the second year, we started on proprietorship. The first year. Just for ourself business bookkeeping. Then, the second year, we took partnership bookkeeping. And the third year, we took up corporation bookkeeping. In fact, when I work for post office, these things, they help me out. So I know the debits and the credits. Of course, I won't be a high paid accountant with that much knowledge, but more or less, you had a knowledge.

NC: But it could have started you on the road?

LT: Yeah, if you went to accounting firm or something like that I think you could pick up faster than the others, I guess.
NC: How long was the school year?

LT: Same thing like the public school. September right through. Maybe one or two earlier or you begin earlier or quit earlier.

NC: September through June?

LT: Nine months.

NC: And what did you do during the summers when you were a teenager?

LT: I worked very hard, for a kid. When I was small--say maybe less than ten years--during the summer, we used to go for the Waialua Plantation. That sugar company. Weeding and watering, irrigating the cane.

NC: This was before you were ten?

LT: Yeah, about ten years old or somewhere around there. Then, when I used to go to high school, in the summer was mostly pineapple field. Picking pineapple, planting pineapple.

NC: What was the pay for boys in those days?

LT: Pineapple was...I don't know. It's dollar. Or was it dollar something. But I was mostly with a contract then--planting contract, picking contract--so, we get paid according to the contract. You make pretty good money for those days. Maybe four, five dollars a day. You average about there, while others, maybe, average in their work, maybe $1.50 or something like that.

NC: Which is harder work? Sugar work or pineapple work?

LT: Well, in the sugar work, we just weeded and irrigated. Picking pineapples was a different thing than now. You don't follow those big machines. Used to get a bag and load all the pineapples in your bag and up to your neck and up to your head and your shoulder. And they used to come out from the pineapple line. That was kind of backbreaker job.

NC: What was the procedure for picking up the pineapple?

LT: You just grab the top and you break it off.

NC: How was that on the hands?

LT: Well, these hands here was just pockmarked with the thorns. You know, have on the pineapple leaves is really sharp. We just have nothing but hole. Full of holes, you know. You just couldn't recognize your hand. But you get used to it after a couple of weeks.

NC: Would it have been possible to work with gloves?

LT: We used to work with the cloth. Gloves. But then it penetrates. So after a while, when you get used to it, we just grab it with the bare
hands. That's all.

NC: Boy, that sounds rough.

LT: Yeah, it was rough. The planting was rough, too. Planting of the pineapples. You have to have a spade. What do you call that? A spade or shovel? You use that and dig a hole and put that pineapple top or slip or whatever it is. Planting. So, your right palm—if you're right-handed—the whole palm used to blister and pus and everything. Then the skin comes hard, and then it's alright. But you suffer for a while.

NC: About how long did it take for the hand...

LT: Oh, I would say, about three weeks to one month, I think. About a month before that hand would be healed and you can use it.

NC: Mr. Takahashi, while you were still a young person going to school and working, did your family take time to observe traditional Japanese days or rituals or religious observances?

LT: Yeah, I guess so. The biggest observance they had was, I should say, the bon season. That's the Japanese Buddhist big event. And the bon season, that is on July to August, I guess. Another big thing they observe was New Year's.

NC: Western New Year's? January 1st?

LT: January 1st. Outside of that, they didn't have too much activities, like that.

NC: Would you say they (LT's family) were active Buddhists?

LT: (Laughs) Well, the funny part of these old people is they don't go to church every Sunday. They used to go to church when the church has certain affairs.

NC: Does the Buddhist religion expect you to go at certain times to the temple?

LT: Not that I know of. Well, they have certain kind of a observance. Buddha's birthday or something like that, and the bon season. Few of that.

NC: Were there any things they were supposed to do at home with any regularity for their Buddhist religion?

LT: No. Of course, I should say, they all have altars with the tablets in there.

NC: You have a beautiful one here.

LT: Well, their ritual was when they cook rice, the first rice, they used to put it up.
NC: To the altar?

LT: Altar. To their ancestors. So, before the rice is eaten by the family or anything, first, they just open the cover. Then the first rice, they scoop it up in a small dish, and put it up.

NC: Who would do that in the family?

LT: Mother.

NC: Did she have to say a prayer with that, or.....

LT: Not a standardized prayer, but, maybe, in her heart, they says, well, "Here you are. Please accept this." Or something like that.

NC: It was an offering?

LT: That's an offering. Or whatever things, maybe, she might make. Maybe something she don't make everyday affair, something unusual. Then, she'd make a certain offering first. Anything is first. First thing is offered there. She used to put up flowers now and then when she can find flowers. They might have religion in their heart, I guess, but it wasn't shown in such a way that you could notice it.

NC: Then how about other traditions? Did your mother dress Western style or Japanese style?

LT: As far as I can remember, I haven't seen her in a Japanese kimono. Mostly those simple Western clothes. You know, the old people used to wear very simple. That's about it.

NC: Do you know if she brought any Japanese clothes with her when she came from Yamaguchi?

LT: No, that I don't.

NC: And did your father have any tradition Japanese clothes?

LT: I haven't seen.

NC: What did they wear at the bon time?

LT: Well, Western clothes. Maybe a little better dress than they were wearing daily. That's about it.

NC: And you dressed, of course, in Western style?

LT: Yeah.

NC: So, where did the family buy the clothes?

LT: I think she used to have it made at the dressmaker. In those days, well,
you have one suit. And one suit, that is it. So, I think he had it made by a tailor, because in the town they used to have several tailor shops and dressmaker shops.

NC: Do you ever remember going to a tailor?

LT: Gee, I don't remember. Maybe I did. Of course, I had a coat and things like that, so I think I went to a tailor shop.

NC: We don't know how much of the clothing was bought in stores ready-made or what.

LT: Ready-made things, we didn't see in our town there. So few people around. Not too many like now. They can just keep it up (now).

NC: How about the work clothes? Were those bought or made?

LT: Work clothes. I think, most of my clothes was made, I guess.

NC: Did your mother make them?

LT: I wonder if she made those. I doubt it. But maybe it was made at a tailor shop. I don't know. I wonder if I saw her at a sewing machine. (Laughs) They had (a sewing machine) because we had my sisters. So, they did some sewing.

NC: Oh, you remember your sisters sewing?

LT: Yeah. They learn to sew.

NC: When you finished at MPI, what was your first job?

LT: My first job was service station attendant.

NC: Where was that?

LT: At Service Motor Company in Wahiawa there. I think I worked for couple of years there, I guess. Then I was transferred to the home office, Waialua Garage as a repair shop clerk down there. I work for few years there. Loaf for a year. Then, I got the job at the post office, and I was stuck for 36 and a half years.

(Laughter)

NC: Now, that was in the 1930s? That you had those jobs, and then you started...

LT: Mum.

NC: Now, that was the Depression years.

LT: Depression year, it was really hard to find jobs. We had to find jobs. The Depression was '29, so '30, '31, '32, '35, it was still things were
bad yet. 1930, I'm very sure that during the summer, I went to work at the cannery. And within one week, you had only one-day job.

NC: So you were working only one day a week that summer?

LT: At the cannery, yeah. So I got disgusted. I came back to the country and work in the field there.

NC: The pineapple field had work?

LT: Yeah. Not too much, but they had work.

NC: Was all of that crop harvested that year? Do you know?

LT: Yes, I guess so. Like, now, during the summer they harvest everything what...I don't know. Now, maybe they have some fruits come out winter time, or in spring. But those days, the fruits used to come out in the summer.

NC: So, then, you could work on the plantation or in the pineapple fields. But yet, the cannery slowed down, and that was supposed to be the harvesting season.

LT: But, I guess maybe too many people apply for the job. I don't know what it is, but...

NC: Sure, because they couldn't get jobs in other things.

LT: Maybe. So, actually, I only work one day. Went up to sign up for it, and they told me to come back on certain day. So, a few of us, we was renting one small little room up Aala Street there. We went down there. They let you know the next time you're going to come. They didn't let me know for couple of weeks, so I came home.

NC: How did that time affect your family? Did your father still have the store?

LT: I think he went back Japan. I just couldn't figure that out now. So they went back to Japan. My father, my mother, and my three sisters. They took them back to Japan. They say it was live and die in Japan. So, 1930s, I don't think he had a store any more.

NC: Did he stay in Japan after he went back?

LT: Yeah. He stayed there. And my mother stayed in there. They died, of course, right now.

NC: And two of your sisters went?

LT: Yeah, three went back, but one came back just before the War. So, two stayed back. They still there yet.
NC: Had all of them been born here?
LT: All of them born here.
NC: So, it wasn't hard for them to come back?
LT: No. But then the War started, and, you know, the transportation and things like that, so...and in the meantime, they got married. So they stayed there.
NC: Besides wanting to go back to die, did your father feel that he had made enough money here so that he could retire? Or did he go to work over there?
LT: No. He just went back to retire. And I don't think so with all the children, he had any money with him. I don't know how he did it, but he went back. He wasn't starving, so he did alright, I guess.
NC: Did your mother also want to go back or did she just go back...
LT: Of course, I think she just followed him.
NC: So, when you started working at the post office, how big a post office was it?
LT: Well, it was just a two-man operation. The postmaster and the clerk. Just the two of us.
NC: What were your working conditions? How many hours work?
LT: Eight hours work and Monday through Saturday. Six days a week.
NC: Was it a full day on Saturday, too?
LT: At the beginning it wasn't, but then, it came to half a day or something like that.
NC: And how much activity was there at the post office? For example, at that time, there may have been a thousand workers at the plantation.
LT: Yeah, just about, I think, thousand, or a little over a thousand employees they had those days.
NC: Was there a lot of correspondence? The people on the plantation and other countries?
LT: No, not too much. That was kind of slow those days, because what thing perked up was after the War or during the War year. Before that, it just was a sleepy post office, I guess you might say. (Laughs)
NC: Well, at the sleepy post office how much did it cost to mail a letter, say, to Japan in 1935, '36, around there?
LT: I think it was five cents? I just couldn't remember 36 years back. But it was...

NC: ...a bargain, huh?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

NC: You were saying, how much were the postcards?

LT: One cent postcards. Then, came up to two cents, three cents. Now, it's five cents or something like that. It was sleepy post office, as I said, but we were kind of busy, because this one post office--Waialua Post Office--used to take care the whole Waialua district. Waialua Post Office is on the plantation property. Now, they built one there at Haleiwa, the Haleiwa Post Office they have now. They had another post office up in the plantation camp up Kawaiola. That town, more or less, it's not there any more, but they used to have a post office there. So, we (Haleiwa and Waialua Post Offices) just take care the whole--just the two of us the whole Waialua district. That is from Kaena Point up to Waimea Bridge.

NC: How did people write in those days? Were there a lot of people who could write their own letters by the 1930s to early '40s?

LT: No, most of them was aliens. Well, Japanese letters, maybe, they wrote it but not in English or anything like that, addressing the thing, like that. Somebody used to help them.

NC: Did you ever have to help them?

LT: Yes, lot of times we did. I can't read the Japanese, but they tell me what it is and I look at that word, and then I think, "Oh, something like that. Must be so and so, address it for them."

NC: Was there a post office box system in those days?

LT: There is a post office box office system.

NC: How many post office boxes did that one station have?

LT: It started out, was about a hundred and something, I guess. There weren't too many boxes around.

NC: Did it cost a lot to rent the box?

LT: At the beginning when I started working there, it was 35¢, I think. Every three months. That thing came up to 45¢. Now it's somewhere around sixty cents. It came up some more after that. So, when I retired, it was about sixty cents or something like that.

NC: That's very reasonable.
LT: But how hard it was to make money. Maybe I shouldn't say it, but there were people who couldn't pay the 35¢ for three months. That shows how the time bad or how hard to come by making money.

NC: Yeah, it was. And if people didn't have a postal box, how did they receive their mail?

LT: That's a interesting thing again. Well, you see, they used to have these stores in the camp. Maybe, one is outside of that plantation, and one is (in the) camp. So, the people around the store there, used to send it all to the store there. He used to take care for us. People come and ask by his store, "Oh, there's a letter for you." The stores used to help us out in delivering those things. Of course, it was against regulation, but that was the system.

Now, the Kawaiola camp--of course, in later years, they had a post office. At the beginning, when they didn't have the post office, the Kawaiola Plantation store used to come pick up all the mail for that Kawaiola camp. He used to take it back and distribute the mail. The system worked like that. But now you can't do those things, of course.

NC: Did the Kawaiola store people come because they would get packages at your post office? Or did they come just to do that as a favor?

LT: Well, as a favor. We used to send the package and everything. Of course, certain things, like registered letters or registered packages, they used to come down. We used to send them notice so they come down to the post office and pick it up.

NC: Did the stores get any merchandise sent through the mail?

LT: No, I don't think so. They were doing that kind of business only individually.

NC: It was a different kind of shipping then for them to get their goods. What was the address system? How would letters be addressed?

LT: Coming to Waialua? Mostly, it was just plain Waialua, Oahu, U.S.A. So, it was our duty to know practically every living person in that district. (Laughs)

NC: How long did it take to get to know everybody in the district?

LT: Well, day in and day out, you look at the letters and you see that there is this, maybe...at first it was kind of hard, but more or less, you start to know exactly where they live and who their children are. In fact, you know the whole history of the family. (Laughs) That is why, the post office, I enjoyed working there, because it was very interesting.

But, now, is the funny part of it. These people I have know for 36 years or so, I notice that some of them I see on the street, I just plain forget their name. I just can't recall who they were, what their name
was. After I got sick I think maybe my head went goofy. And here I been knowing them for 36 years and day in and day out with them, and I just couldn't recall what their name was.

NC: Now, after those years of getting to know everybody and people going to the post office box, when did home delivery start?

LT: Chee, home delivery started twenty some odd years ago, I guess.

NC: It's that young?

LT: Yeah, it's not too old. The delivery man, he has been with the post office for little over twenty years, so, I think, little over twenty years. It's not too old.

NC: So, then, the address system...

LT: Changed.

NC: What kinds of changes did you see then in the address on the letter?

LT: Well, they address it to their house now. It's not the city delivery so, it's a rural delivery. So, they have to have rural delivery box number. They put up the box and we give them box number for that. RR. So, that's the box address now.

NC: And do you know how the box number is designated?

LT: Yes. More or less one section, well, we start with one. Then we go down there and maybe get three hundred houses here in this section. Well, we reserve from one to three hundred. So, in between, anybody ask number, we used to assign. More or less, in chronological order.

NC: Was this decision made by you locally, or did the postmaster of Honolulu have to get a law?

LT: No. We did everything our own. The next block, maybe, we start with four hundred up to five hundred. Then, the next block, maybe, start from six hundred to eight hundred. Things like that.

NC: So, you systematized it?

LT: Yeah.

NC: We're talking about Waialua. Did you also have to do it for Haleiwa?

LT: No. Haleiwa, well, they did their own.

NC: Oh, so then, by that time, Haleiwa got its own post office?

LT: Post office and they had their rural delivery. Now they have a city delivery, too, down Haleiwa.
NC: Does Waialua?

LT: No, Waialua just have rural to it because it's a second class post office, yet.

NC: It's a second class?

LT: Haleiwa is a first class. They determine that by the volume of business you do for a year. Gross receipts.

NC: Is there a big difference between the volume in Haleiwa and the volume of business in...

LT: Waialua? Well, I wouldn't think too much difference there. Just about the same. Maybe, they do more receipts.

NC: Over the years, did people receive foreign newspapers or foreign publications?

LT: Yeah, I think, maybe, few of them did. I don't think too many, because those days people wasn't too concerned about reading or writing because they was so busy with their work, I guess.

NC: Hours were long.

LT: Yeah, hours was long, I guess.

NC: The few who did receive a foreign newspaper or something like that, was that so exceptional that there would be talk about it at the post office?

LT: No, not at all.

NC: I mean friendly talk. I don't mean bad (talk).

LT: No I don't think so anything, because, those newspapers and magazines, in the post office, they call it junk mail anyway. So, when they come in, they come in bags full. We just sort it out. We don't know who got what and so...

NC: Would you think it meant, maybe, that was a better educated person? The one who was receiving...

LT: Maybe, yeah. Of course, the community was mostly Japanese and Filipinos, a few sprinklings of Koreans and maybe just a handful of Chinese. That's about all. And, of course, the rest is Portuguese and, maybe, a few Puerto Ricans and that's it.

NC: By 1935 and after, there were few Puerto Ricans.

LT: There were few Puerto Rican people. You see, that plantation community, one section was like mostly Japanese people live in. One section was the Filipino section, and one was Portuguese town. So it was more or less segregated. They didn't mean to segregate it, but they wanted to live
among themselves, I guess. I don't think the plantation segregated the thing or anything.

NC: You think the people chose?

LT: I think they rather stay close to their own nationality.

NC: Their own language.

LT: Yeah. I can understand that, sure.

NC: Was there more correspondence with the old country among one group more than any other group.

LT: Yes. I think the Filipino people used to correspond more with their Filipino people.

NC: How about the money order business? Who took out the most money orders for sending money home?

LT: Well, they didn't send too much money home. I think, most of them are the Filipinos and the Japanese. I say Filipino more, maybe, because most of these Filipino people that were working in the plantation, they were married people. They left their family in the Philippines. So, I think they were sending money to their families. Japanese people, of course, they have their wife and every family here, so maybe, that was to their relatives on certain occasions. New Year or certain like that. Just a few dollars they send there.

NC: When it came to the handwriting, did you have occasion to notice different styles of handwriting when they wrote in English?

LT: Well, maybe, they have someone to address it for them. This was all mostly in longhand.

NC: Was there any fancy... you know, some longhand is fancy.

LT: No, no. Just the plain.

NC: How about the parcel post service? Did people make much use of that?

LT: Well, at the very beginning when I started work, during Christmas or New Year. That's about all, I guess. They send their little things back to the family, homeland or something.

NC: So, was there a noticeable increase in mail during Christmas?

LT: Oh, yes.

NC: Just like it still is? When did people start sending Christmas cards out? As long as you were there, were they doing that?
LT: Yes, Christmas cards.

NC: 1935, it was already a custom here?

LT: Yeah. Maybe, this information is off track, but at the beginning, just before the War, the people who used to come to the post office was the mothers or the husbands. There hardly any teenagers or any kids that used to come around. Since the War, the things have change. Whether to call that self a teenagers. That fad or what, I don't know. I wouldn't say it's a fad, but that's what they call themselves. Then they used to come to that post office. Until then, it was hardly you see these young people come to the post office. The parents was doing all the business. Send money. You know, sending money to a certain company or insurance directly, or sending things to Japan. Well, their parents used to do all those thing. Now, you see nothing but teenagers around which is a healthy sign, I guess, for the young to get involved in the family.

NC: Are they writing letters?

LT: The teenagers? All of them, they do lot of correspondence.

NC: So, they are communicating more? Then, how about the interest in, like, stamp collections? Did you have any stamp collectors that used to come to the post office?

LT: We had few stamp collectors. I would say that they were kind of big collectors, because they used to buy by the sheets. Not by one or two, two of one block, but they used to buy by the sheets. We had a few people there was collecting there.

NC: Why would they buy by the sheet?

LT: Because it was a matter of business, I guess. Maybe, someday they want to sell the whole thing and they sell it all by the sheets.

NC: Would have more value?

LT: Yeah, I guess.

NC: Now, when it came to salary for the post office workers, what was a typical salary in those days? 1935?

LT: I started with $83.33. I still remember that salary. (Laughs) I had it for a long, long time, simply because '29 was a Depression years, and after that, so many years Depression yet and the country was still in a pretty bad shape. So, they couldn't give any raise or anything like that. So, we just kept on going with $83.33. That was considered good salary those days.

NC: Did you keep a budget?

LT: My personal budget? No, no. I never did. In fact, I spent all the money,
every month.

(Laughter)

NC: Were you married by then?

LT: No, I was still single. I got married in 1941.

NC: Did Waialua have a bank in those days?

LT: Oh yes.

NC: That you could start a bank account if you wanted to?

LT: If you wanted. Still, there is the two bank. Bank of Hawaii. And-- at the beginning days, way back, they used to call it the Bishop Bank. First National Bank. That was the Bishop Bank. They changed the name into First Hawaiian Bank.

NC: When you were in school, did anybody come and encourage the school kids to start a bank account?

LT: No, none that I remember.

NC: Did your money go very far?

LT: No. Went mostly to beer joints.

NC: What were the beer joints? Were they around Waialua?

LT: Yeah, they used to have. They had one in Waialua camp, and then couple in Haleiwa town. But, now, you don't see them. 'As gone already. The restaurants, Sea View Inn, like that, they used to serve beer, liquor. Still they do, now.

NC: Did they call 'em beer joints or beer garden or what?

LT: Oh, they call themself restaurants and cafe or something like that, because they serve food on top of that.

NC: But most of the business was beer?

LT: Yeah, yeah. You can get everything from saimin to what else, but being the country, well, they didn't have just a separate beer joints. So, the restaurants used to serve beer and things like that.

NC: Was that a place to socialize, meet friends?

LT: In a way. Yet, I wouldn't say real that's a place to socialize. But when you go there, you see somebody that you know is drinking, so, you get together.
NC: But since they were also cafes or restaurants, did families go?

LT: The family, no. Hardly any family went to those place. Wasn't a rough place or anything, but, being the country, you hardly see them go out and eat at the restaurant. They all ate at home. That's a trend that the farther you are away from Honolulu, they don't go out to eat those place. Wahiawa town, it's more city like, so you see families go out to the restaurants. Honolulu, maybe, the families go out every month to have dinner outside. But in country, no. It's all different.

NC: By what time would their places open and close?

LT: They used to open from about noon hours till about 12 o'clock in the night, I guess, where they serve beer.

NC: If families didn't go, did ladies go?

LT: No. Strictly the men.

NC: Were there any other places in town where, maybe, just the men went? Was there a pool hall?

LT: Few pool halls, yeah. Well, that wasn't too much of a recreation for either sex.

NC: So the girls stayed home but the boys had a few choices?

LT: Yeah. Go out and fool around and get drunk or something like that.

NC: How did you meet Mrs. Takahashi?

LT: She was going to one dressmaker shop. Then I see the dressmaker shop. Well, my post office was in Waialua and I used to live in Haleiwa, so on my way back, people that are near my home, I used to bring their mail back for them. So I used to go down there, and see her, too. Well, she was sitting down. The next time I see her, she was working at Sea View Inn. So, we was better acquainted. And that started.... (Laughs)

NC: So, you didn't have to go through any formal Japanese style of meeting the girl?

LT: I know what you mean. Matchmaking kind. No, no.

NC: But, still, did you have to talk to her parents?

LT: That was a custom. Yeah, that's the customs, even though you two say, "Let's get married." "Okay." But being respect to the parents, still you have to do those things.

NC: How did you prepare to talk to the parents?

LT: Well, you usually have a go-between. I have somebody who will stand up and go over there and talk for me. And says, "He wants to get married
to your daughter," and this and that. You know, those simple rituals they have for arranging marriage.

NC: So, you did have to do that?

LT: Well, you don't have to do it, but that was the proper...

NC: Oh, yeah! I understand. Out of respect. Was this a person that you knew and that her family knew?

LT: In most cases, it'll work out that way that person would know two sides, more or less.

NC: Even though you and Mrs. Takahashi are more modern, did her parents--was there anything else they expected you to do besides have the go-between go and speak for you? Was there any other part to this tradition?

LT: No, no. It was just that. Well, the wife side have somebody to stand up for them, too. Maybe the go-between more or less settles everything. The party, and whether the expenses should be prorated or what. All those things. The little details of marriage, well, they handle it for you.

NC: Then what kind of a wedding did you have?

LT: A Buddhist wedding.

NC: Was it required in those days to get a license in order to get married?

LT: No, I don't think I have a license. No.

NC: You know, the civil part that we have to do now, you know, to get...

LT: You have to get a blood test or something like that. No, we didn't have to go through that. Went to the temple. And then the Buddhist priest made the ceremony. Then we sign a piece of paper. And there you go; you were married. Maybe he forwards that to the....I don't know what.

NC: Maybe he had to register it.

LT: Yeah, he registered and send it out to the Board of Health or someplace. He took care of all those things.

NC: Then, was there a reception?

LT: Yeah.

NC: Who was invited to the reception?

LT: Well, my wife's side, their family will invite their friends. Maybe she will invite her friends. The same thing like my side. But my parents wasn't there, so I just more or less...my parents' friends. Maybe,
the old people, and my friends.

NC: Were there traditions to be observed at the wedding reception, too?

LT: Yes. Well, I was married under the old custom there, so there was speech-making and all that thing. And, well, singing and drinking.

NC: What kind of foods were served?

LT: Well, in my day, the wedding reception was more of a modern thing. Like now, well, you have there wedding reception, they don't do it locally, but they want to go to Sheraton Waikiki or something like that. Mine, had one restaurant in Waialua, Haleiwa there. But before those days, all this wedding things like that was done at home. They used to pitch up a big tent and the whole community people would gather there and help them cook the food and serve. But, at my time already, that, we used to go to a restaurant.

NC: Although yours was modern, did anybody turn up in tradition Japanese clothes?

LT: No, only my wife. She had to change kimono a couple of times.

NC: Oh, for the Buddhist part of the ceremony.

LT: No, at the wedding reception. They do that.

NC: Oh, excuse me. I shouldn't have assumed....so, she had to change?

LT: Yeah, they usually do. Maybe, I don't know what you call that. Come out in their wedding kimono, actually, I should say. Maybe, the American way is the wedding veil or something. Well, they have their own marriage kimono, I guess, with the head piece. You know the white....the head piece and all that? Then, after the first part of the service is over, she goes back and have it changed to a more comfortable kimono or something. They still do that if you marry in Japanese way.

NC: Does the bride keep that wedding kimono?

LT: Yeah, that's hers.

NC: I mean, like, does Mrs. Takahashi still have it?

LT: I don't know whether she have it. She have some kimono here, but most of her kimono was....she had it all in a trunk and one big rainy day, that place was flooded. All the water went into that kimono, and she lost practically all of her kimonos there.

NC: That's terrible.

LT: It was flooded and the water seeped into this trunk.

NC: When you were married, did you move into a house or apartment?
LT: Yes. We rented one house there.
NC: Did you live in Waialua?
LT: Haleiwa.
NC: Was it easy to rent houses in Haleiwa?
LT: Well, there wasn't too many houses to rent, but somehow, we knew the people there. It was $25 a month rent.
NC: That was a big chunk of your salary. Was it a big house for the $25 a month?
LT: It was a two-bedroom house, a cottage. Had two bedroom, parlor, and a kitchen, and an outside car port.
NC: Do you have any children?
LT: No children.
NC: Did you start making a budget after you got married?
LT: No budget.
NC: After that $83.33 a month, when did you get a raise?
LT: Let's see. Just before the War, I think.
NC: And when did the post office grow to have more workers than two?
LT: Well, just before the War, it start to get a little big. Because the community was growing and the Mokuleia section there, people used to build houses, and people used to come in. More population. Of course, when you had more population...more communications they do.
NC: Did it grow again during the War?
LT: Yes, it did. From then on, practically every year, the gross receipt was climbing, climbing, climbing.
NC: During the War, did a lot of new people come into the community?
LT: From the wartime, yeah.
NC: What did they come to do?
LT: Most of them was outside of the plantation. The Mokuleia section. So I presume they were working for the government. U.S.E.D. or something.
NC: Did any part of the business of the post office increase significantly?
LT: Yes. We sold war bonds. (Laughs) And that is mostly to---you be surprised at the soldiers used to buy those war bonds. Of course, they had plenty community people all involved in buying, too, but lot of soldiers bought the war bonds. Because, you see, certain battalion or group was stationed here, the whole district of Waialua. And in the mountains. On payday, who's in charge of those financial stuff for the company used to come down and just put it down that they want so many war bonds. Used to work down Kahuku and down Mokuleia. They used to buy quite a bit of war bonds, too. So, we sold quite a bit of war bonds. And locally, people used to buy, too. Every month.

NC: I wonder how come these soldiers decided to save their money?

LT: Well, maybe, they didn't have anyplace to spend it, living in a small country town there.

NC: So, the town didn't open up anymore beer places or restaurants during the War?

LT: No, no. What the restaurants was there, that's all stayed the same. That Haleiwa town, maybe, now it's growing little bit, but it was a steady town. It never did grow. It never did get small. It just went along in the same pace.

NC: Since you're not one to budget, how did you keep track of your money?

LT: Well, what we have to pay, we paid. What we have to buy, we buy it. If we feel as though we running short of money, well, then take it easy. (Laughs)

NC: Were you allowed to shop at the plantation store?

LT: Yes. It was open to the public.

NC: Now they gave credit to the plantation workers. Did they give credit to the outsiders, too?

LT: Yeah, I think they do. Or maybe just to the plantation people, I don't know. But, I haven't...we paid cash for it.

NC: What kinds of things did you buy there?

LT: I hardly patronize the plantation store there. It was right across from the post office, but we usually shopped at Haleiwa, so.

NC: Did you live in Haleiwa long?

LT: Yes.

NC: How many years residence?

LT: From grade school right through till the end of the War. Then I move up here.
NC: Then you moved to Wahiawa?

LT: Mhm.

NC: While you were working at the post office, you were living here?

LT: No, I went back to Waialua.

NC: When did you move to Wahiawa?

LT: I was appointed 1966. I moved back I think it was 1971. Somewhere around there.

NC: Obviously, you prefer living in Wahiawa.

LT: Mhm.

NC: What's the difference that you choose to live in Wahiawa? The difference between the areas?

LT: Well, mostly, it's the climate. It's cool down here. Haleiwa and Waialua is more of a hot place. Waialua is a very nice town to live because, being a country town, you know everybody. You see everybody on the street. "Hi." "Hi." You know what I mean. (Laughs) The good old socializing there. You practically know everyone that he walk down the street there. Of course, my case was a little different, cause I was working in the post office. So, more or less, I know practically everybody. As you come out to more citified place, well, they keep more to themselves than country people.

NC: When we were talking the first time, you said that you like to play golf. Where do you play around here?

LT: I mostly go to Kahuku Golf Course, and maybe once a month I go to the different courses here.

NC: Is there a really a good course in this area?

LT: Yes, there's one right in Mililani Town. Mililani Golf Course. They have the country club. The Kunia. It's all near distance. Then you have the Pearlridge Golf Course or whatever it is.

NC: Do you see many of the Waialua people out on the golf course? Or the Haleiwa people?

LT: Yes. Haleiwa, Waialua, they all golf. The young ones.

NC: Do you think that the post office should be designated a first class post office?

LT: You mean, Waialua? Well, it will be, if they have enough receipts. We make so much a year, receipt so much a year in certain category. So much in another category. It's a more or less a second class (post
office), but it's in the top second class there. The next stop would be the lower first class.

NC: We're talking about recreation now. When you were a child, were there any organized activities?

LT: No. You see, the great difference between our days and today is, today, you see all the parents are involved in making these Little Leagues and they're doing, little Soccer League and football league. The parents are involved and trying to make this league, so let the kids play.

In our days, we didn't have those parents' participation. You are on your own. We kids used to make our own fun. Go to swimming together, play baseball, football. Play marbles. Mango season, then we all get together, go up the valley, pick up mangos and things like that. So we used to make our own fun. Maybe the parents was so used to we taking care of ourselves—well, they were busy. They was working hard, those days.

So, we go to, say, some summer morning, I wen go, "Hey!" We tell 'em like that. "Tomorrow let's go swimming." "Okay." Then we go to the river. Swim whole morning in the river. The river water is warm over there than the ocean water, so we swim in the river. Afternoon, then we go to the ocean, swim in the ocean. When we come back, we come back about, say, it's kind of dark. The parents wasn't concerned a bit. When you came back, they never ask you where you were or what you were doing. And, you know, well, maybe, they took it for granted that we all good kids. (Laughs) More or less, they knew that we could take care of our own because we go in a bunch.

NC: So, your parents were comfortable about where you were and so on. But did they ever say, "Be careful of this," or "Be careful of that"?

LT: No. That I haven't heard. Well, even though we come back late in the evening, I haven't heard any other boys got licking or scolding or anything like that. So, maybe the parents, they all had the same idea, I guess.

Was kids, we just made our fun for the day according to the season, I guess. Was baseball season, we play baseball all day. Football season, we played football. We did some lot of hiking. Maybe some days, well, the plantation train was hauling cane through the town...

END OF INTERVIEW
NC: This is the second interview with Mr. Takahashi at his home in Wahiawa. Today is the 3rd of August, 1976. How are you feeling, Mr. Takahashi?

LT: Well, fine.

NC: That's good. You know, last time we talked, you told me that your dad had gone back to Japan. Can you tell me about that, please?

LT: Yeah. Well, I guess their intention was to come Hawaii just to make money so that they could go back and have a little better life. Because he was old, so he wants to go back and at least die in his own country. Maybe that was the uppermost reason why he went back. Just to die in his own homeland.

NC: Was he much older than your mother?

LT: Yes, they were about twenty years difference.

NC: Had their marriage been arranged in Japan? Was that the traditional thing?

LT: No. I doubt it because, you see, she was from another prefecture from my father. My father was Hiroshima and she was from Yamaguchi, so I don't think their marriage was arranged in Japan. I think, maybe, she was a picture bride something like that, I guess. (Chuckles) They got together when they were in Hawaii. So, not the old fashioned marriage.

NC: Your father was different from other Japanese people; he didn't stay on a plantation.

LT: Yes. I don't know how many years he work at the plantation, but then he left the plantation and build his own business. But it's not a big business, but the small little. He was a man that didn't want to work under nobody.

NC: Do you think this contributed to his success in being able to go back and stay?
LT: Well, in a way, I guess. What I heard about his life is that when he was in Japan, he used to have some kind of a business. In those old days, they say he had a ship or something and transported goods from port to port or something like that. More of a business minded person, I'll say.

NC: Did you hear of other plantation workers or people who went into business for themselves? Other Japanese going back to Japan?

LT: Some of them went back, pull up stakes and then they went back, I guess.

NC: Yeah, because when they came, all of them intended to make money and go back.

LT: I think that was the real reason for them to come to Hawaii. Just to make money and go back. So, lot of them they stayed at the plantation. As you notice, those who left the plantation, in Honolulu, they have lot of big businessmen. They all came under contract, too. Most of them came under contract to the plantation, and then they left the plantation. Then, started their own business, I guess, in town.

NC: I wonder how many of the ones who came and wanted to go back ever really went back?

LT: Chee, I can't say that. But it seems not too many went back, because most of them stayed at the plantation, and so you see the children growing up and going to school. Of course, the parents stayed there.

NC: So you think they stayed, because....

LT: For the children.

NC: More opportunity?

LT: More opportunities, I guess, since they came for three years contract with the plantation. Some of them, they started to have children, and this and that. I guess, that kept them in Hawaii.

NC: I wonder how much it cost to go back by ship, which was the only was in those days.

(Laughter)

LT: Chee, that, I wouldn't know.

NC: Because when they first came, they didn't make much money. How could they save?

LT: Well, in those days, with that money they made, they couldn't be extravagant. That's for sure. Well, most of them owned garden, or raise few chickens. And the fruit trees in the back. Papayas and bananas and things like that. They saved quite a bit on what they ate. Food bill.
NC: But would it help them save cash, for example?

LT: No, I don't think they save too much cash.

NC: Now, another thing that you told me—which we didn't get on the last tape—was about how much you liked to work at the post office and why.

LT: Well, to start off with, I tell you, if I have to go back and work again, I'll do the same thing. I'll work at the post office. Because that's the most interesting job, I think, any man can find. By that, I mean, meeting the people, the public of all different races, and talking to them. In a small post office like that, everybody knows everybody. We so free that we talk about everything. It's really interesting.

NC: So, how come the people gathered there?

LT: I worked there for 36 years, so, I would say about thirty years ago or 36 years ago, post office was a place where people came and met each other. They talked, and had a great time. In other words, it's something like those little stores way up in the Mainland, in a country district where all the people gather and talk things over and have a great time. Was something like that. They come for their mail...and then, another person would come for their mail. They start talking. And another would come. And before you know it, whole group is there having a nice jam session. Talking away. I think it was really nice to see them get together like that.

NC: Were any of the people outstanding in any way? I mean, did you have, like, somebody who was a clown?

LT: Oh, yes. We used to have those people there. Even among the old people, you find some leader who can out-talk the other, so he's the head, I guess.

The interesting part is that we had a bunch of Portuguese old people. Men, of course. They used to gather every morning there at the post office at certain time. One come for the mail, and he hangs around there, wait for another one to come. Then, the other guy comes and he pretend that he go look for his mail. Then he start to stick around. Then, before you know, you have about eight or ten of them sitting on the porch there on the steps. Here they start talking away. You know how those people...they really enjoy talking. So, then, they start to crack jokes. Amazing how many jokes they know. So, we used to join them in just to listen. And when the whole bunch of us go and listen to them, they just try to outdo each other. Practically every morning this session was going on.

(Laughter)

LT: We had another younger group that used to come in the morning there—it was just something like a quarterback club—and rehash the ball game they had or the football game they had, and all kinds of stories. It was a
great meeting place for those people.

NC: Does it still function that way, too?

LT: Not now. It's more business-like, now. That post office, it's torn down now. It was an old wooden building, and they had a porch outside the....it's not something like now that you go into the building. They had this porch around the post office. There the people gathered and talk. It's a post office, but it was a public gathering place. Well, now they changed it. Like all post office, they have to do the business inside of the building.

NC: Are most of the post offices built the same way?

LT: You mean the present one? Yeah, I think it's more business-like. But this wooden building was a plantation clubhouse, I understand. Later they put a surveyor's office in there. The post office and surveyor's office. And they had a small barbershop in the building. It wasn't anything like the post office like we have now. It was a real....just a big old building there.

NC: Did the Federal government own it, or lease it?

LT: No, it was leased from the plantation.

NC: I wonder what the yearly rental was.

LT: I used to go to the plantation and pay that monthly rental out. It was somewhere around---let me see. Between $15 and $25 a month. And free water, free lights, and they took care of the repairing. It was something. I would say it was a free thing.

NC: So you say you think our government had a good deal there, huh?

LT: Oh, boy. You can't find a deal like that anywhere. Yeah, they used to take care. Of course, being in the plantation community--we rented from them--they took care of the building for us. Once in a while, they had it painted, and all those things.

NC: Were there particular colors they had to paint it? Was that a federal rule?

LT: No. Something they think they want to paint it, paint it.

NC: Oh. Whichever color they had that....that was it. Did anybody plant flowers around that post office, or were there any kind of landscaping around it?

LT: No landscaping. Only thing, there was a big, big tree in front of the post office. The tree is still there. We used to call it the elephant ear tree. You know, they have a seed just like big elephant ear. So we used to call in an elephant ear. They had a scientific name. I just couldn't remember that.
The funny part of this tree is... a Chinese man, well, he's gone now. He died, but when he was a young man, he used to work at this clubhouse. Maybe, they serve meals or something like that to the lunas or superintendents, or the bachelors. So he planted this tree and through his kitchen windows, he used to water that. He just get a pan of water and he just threw it out of the kitchen with... (Laughs) At that time I heard that, that tree was about seventy years old. So, it would be about close to hundred years old now, I'll bet. Still, there is a big, big tree. Beautiful tree. The branches just spreads all around. It's right next to the library. Next to the library, there is a big, big tree that just like ohai tree.

NC: Just one seed, huh, will do it.

LT: Yeah, one seed.

(Laughter)

LT: You see, he was a young man and he used to help with the clubhouse. He used to just throw the water outside from the kitchen window and water the thing.

NC: When you first started to work there, did people still go around on horseback?

LT: No more horseback. Most of the people had their own Ford car.

NC: I wonder how much those sold for, over here?

LT: Less than a thousand dollars, I guess.

NC: On the Mainland, there was the eight hundred dollar car. Maybe we could go to some of the other factors of that period. Mr. Takahashi, as paternalism was done away with and the people started getting more salary instead of privileges or perquisites, how did they learn to handle more cash, or.... was any of that apparent to you in your work at the post office?

LT: Well, yeah. They used the post office to pay their bills, send money to the savings bank or things like that. After the War, naturally people earn more money, they start to use that money to catch up all the things they didn't have before. In other words, their standard of living came a little higher than what they were used to. When this union people coming in and with this War that came. As I say, it has been continuing from then on right up to the present that people is earning more money.

NC: Then you could see how they were using it.

LT: Yes. They were using mostly for home use. Like paying for appliances or furnitures and things like that. And saving here and there, the saving accounts.
NC: So, they didn't go wild all of a sudden or.....

LT: No, no. That's the plantation community there. Well, Haleiwa is outskirt of Waialua, but you could say Haleiwa business people was depending on the plantation people. So it's just the same Waialua community. One community. Yeah. In Haleiwa, that's where they had stores. The plantation was just plantation sugar business, so.....no, I don't think so with this money, people start losing their head and spending recklessly simply because the previous years was they used to have pretty rough time in earning money. So I think they used it wisely.

NC: As improvements came at the plantation, the neighboring area of Waialua and Haleiwa, did improvements come in there? Did the plantation and the whole area get electricity at the same time?

LT: Chee, that I wouldn't know. Because the Haleiwa district, electricity came in when I was still a young kid. Maybe, the plantation, electricity was supplied to the plantation camps by the plantation. By that, I mean that I think they used to have the source of power from the sugar mill that generated electricity. 1940 and then they cut it over to the Hawaiian Electric power.

NC: So at the beginning they generated their own.

LT: I think so.

NC: Do you remember when your family got its first radio?

LT: No, that I don't.

NC: Do you remember what programs you used to listen to when you did have a radio?

LT: Yeah. That was mostly Jack Benny, Amos and Andy.

NC: Those were very popular programs. Was there any Hawaiian or Japanese language programs in those early days?

LT: I don't think that they had.

NC: Really?

LT: Not those early days. That came way, way back.

NC: Were you aware of where the radio station or stations were located?

LT: (Laughs) No, I don't...

NC: Oh, did Amos and Andy come straight from the Mainland?

LT: It didn't. I think, it was here.
NC: Did you have a record player?

LT: Those days, was a phonograph. Hand crank. Not electrically operated.

NC: And was that something that you had?

LT: No, that was my parents. My parents had.

NC: Kids now days spend so much money on records.

LT: Yeah. I didn't have any English records. Was mostly Japanese records that the parents had. Mostly was folk songs. They call it Naniwabushi or something like that. It was a folk song type.

NC: Were those bought locally?

LT: They was bought from here.

NC: They were bought locally? Were those carried in the stores in Haleiwa?

LT: No, no. Not around here.

NC: Had to go to....

LT: Town and get it.

NC: When conditions went on changing at the plantation, like, when they got the eight hour day, did your hours coincide with the working hours of the plantation?

LT: Yes. Post office is always—we try to coincide with the community working hours. At the beginning, it was pau hana at 3:30 or something so we worked till about 5 o'clock. We started late at 8 o'clock. 8 to 5 or something like that. So, trying to serve the public as much as possible.

NC: You lived in the community. Did you participate or watch any of their athletic activities? And so on.

LT: Once in a while I used to see their baseball games and football games, but the football game was the barefoot league.

(Laughter)

LT: Those boys used to get together, make a team, and play with other community team.

NC: Did the people in the community go out to these things a lot, or....

LT: Oh yes. Especially baseball.

NC: They would have large crowds?
LT: Yeah. Because practically all the plantation used to have a baseball team. Of course, on that side, AJA, the Japanese boys on the plantation used to have baseball team. Waipahu have. Kahuku. And Waialua. They used to have series every year, and they used to draw quite a bit of crowd.

NC: Did the post office ever have any trouble, burglars, any thievery or anything like that?

LT: While I was there, no. We didn't have any thievery. The early years when we had a rural route delivery, then we had a little pranks done by kids, during the Christmas season or New Year season. Kids, they put a big batch of firecrackers in the mailbox and blow it up.

(Laughter)

LT: We had a few cases of that.

NC: With mail inside?

LT: No mail. They take all the powder from the firecrackers and they put it in a pipe or something. Then they just make it into something like dynamite, and they just put it in, and blow it up. We had a few of that. And a few mail missing. Those was the little kids. You know, they were going for mailbox. Mailbox open and see what's in there. They just took it out and throw it out around the premises there. They didn't mean any harm. They just didn't know anything better, I guess.

NC: It was just that mild kind of thing?

LT: Just mild kind of thing. Nothing serious.

NC: Is there anything serious now?

LT: No, I don't think so. Nobody break in. Only thing, last time I read in the paper that somebody tried to burn the mail in the Wahiawa Post Office mail drop.

NC: Wow! Now, when the War started, were there any new working conditions laid out for the post office?

LT: No. I think those was the easy-going days, so only condition was that we were frozen to our job. "Eh, the War came." So I said, "Oh, I'm going to make some money." I tried to get up, but then you were frozen, so you guys have to stay there till the end of the War.

NC: Did you receive any instructions that letters going to any certain place were to be taken out for censorship?

LT: No, no.

NC: No mail was censored?
LT: Well, not at our post office. Maybe they did it at the Honolulu Post Office. Were some of the censors there, but not at a local post office.

NC: Did the post office in Hawaii still accept mail to be delivered in Japan?

LT: You mean, during the War? No, no.

NC: Could not write to Japan?

LT: All mail has been stopped, I guess, for the warring countries.

NC: Suppose that somebody had--a perfectly loyal American--maybe had grandparents over there that they were worried about. Was there any way to communicate?

LT: No way of communication until the War was ended.

NC: Some people had brothers and sisters and could not communicate?

LT: Well, I had my parents, my mother there and my sister, too. Couldn't communicate with them.

NC: The whole war, you couldn't communicate? You couldn't even go through the Red Cross or something?

LT: Well, no. I think Red Cross is in case of an emergency, I guess, or something like that.

NC: The conditions of martial law and the wartime conditions, did the people ever talk about them that, you know....

LT: Whether the martial law was strict or something like that? No, I think they just took it in their stride. There was a war going on, and people understood what the Army or the government had to do. So, we had blackouts. Shaded our window and all that. Shaded our automobile headlights, and it was gas rations and all that. But we made out. It was just a condition at that time. So, they just took it as it is.

NC: On the Mainland, we used to have a practice like once a month, you know. Draw the curtains or something.

(Laughter)

NC: We're laughing, but I wonder how many children got frightened with those conditions and all that?

LT: I don't think so because most of them had the window blacked out. Had lights in the house. So, if the light didn't leak out, well, it was okay.

NC: Was there anything that was changed in the post office because of the War? How about Mainland mail? Was that delivery affected?
LT: The mail situation wasn't that bad. They had lot of V mails, because lot of those parents had their sons in the service and they had V mail. So, the mail was going through. Business as usual was during the War. In fact, we were much busier because we had to issue war bonds.

NC: The V mail came free, right? No stamp?

LT: Yeah. No stamp.

NC: By the way, where were you December 7th?

LT: I couldn't forget that day, and neither can my friends. (Laughs) On December the 6th--we was married a week before--we had our marriage reception. (Laughs) Everybody had lots to drink and this and that. Next morning they woke up, they found out that the War was going on.

NC: And, so, they found out it wasn't just a hangover?

LT: No, it wasn't a hangover.

(Laughter)

NC: So, what did you do on that day? Did you...

LT: When I woke up that Sunday, war was going on. I didn't believe. I says, "Nah!" So, I jump on my car and then I went down to the Kawaiola Airfield. Used to have a airfield down Kawaiola, right alongside of the ocean there. They call it a airfield where the planes used to land and take off. So, I saw all the soldiers over there having their practice. I said, "No, it couldn't be." So, I came back. "No, no, no. There isn't any war. All the soldiers down there is having a nice practice this morning." But later on we found out.

We had those days the kiawe corp. Once a week, we used to go out and clean up certain areas along the beaches. Chop the trees down and this and that to have it cleared. So, if they are attacked, they could see the enemy. We just got together and disperse, I guess. I don't know (if you know) by what I meant by kiawe corps, but that's a committee people used to come out and clear up the brushes and trees on certain area of the place where they think if the enemy landed, they could hide or something like that. So we cleared out those.

NC: These were teams, of who?

LT: Anybody in the community, young and old used to come out.

NC: Who had organized that effort, do you know?

LT: That I don't know.

NC: And was it one ethnic group, or was it everybody?

LT: No, no. Everybody.
NC: How long had that been going on before December 7th?

LT: Chee....I wonder if that came before December 7th? Yeah, I think it was organized...

NC: Not too long before? Somebody had an idea that it might be attacked, huh?

LT: An idea, yeah, and then...or maybe somebody has concern. In case of anything happen, maybe have it clean up and this and that. I don't think it was a whole island affair or something. Maybe it was just locals....

NC: Could be. Because first time I've heard of it. Did you have any fear of any kind of sabotage at the post office, for example?

LT: No, not at all. It was a community that's easy-going community. Lot of people knowing one another, so no fear of those things. It was business as usual. Normal, easy-going.

NC: Did you notice any effects on the community because of more troops coming into Schofield or defense workers coming?

LT: Yeah. The troops was all around Haleiwa and Waialua districts up the hills and around the beaches there. And the USED Corps. Only thing I can see, maybe the community gained something with them businesss-wise. The post office was busy, because the outfits used to come down to the post office and buy stamps for certain groups. And then, war savings bonds.

NC: Was liquor restricted in any way during those days or beer? Things like that?

LT: Yes, yes. After the War started, I think, it was restricted. I know it was restricted because we had some kind of card or something that was issued in that. We used to go just once a week and you could just get a quart of whiskey or something like that.

NC: Was that because they were using the raw material for something else, or to keep the soldiers from overindulging, or was there a reason?

LT: No, I don't know. Maybe there is not enough liquor to go around, I suppose. (laughs) So restricted. See, it was just like the gas ration, I guess.

NC: Did the gas rationing affect the postal delivery in any way?

LT: No, at that time, we didn't have deliveries, so. The delivery came a years later back. Well, we had gas ration. But then, we didn't travel much. So, it was alright.

NC: Was there any defense work that you could volunteer for?

NC: Did that group on clearing the....

LT: No. They disbanded at the War.

NC: 'Cause you finished clearing it up.

LT: Yeah, we disbanded, because then the troops are start coming in and this and that, so.

NC: So, didn't have the same concern? It was off your mind?

LT: All taken care by the military.

NC: Did you have any nephew or nieces that went into the war effort?

LT: No, not during the War.

NC: They may have been too young then, huh?

LT: After the War, they went in the service.

NC: Because the sisters who stayed were younger than you?

LT: Yeah.

NC: So their children were young during the time?

LT: Yeah.

NC: Now, when the union organizers started coming out to this area, was there any excitement about that you were aware of?

LT: No. Maybe, when they first organize, the union organizers used to come see the individuals or a group of them which we didn't see or anything. But then, after they organized the union, the members that belong to the union was really for it. They were very active. They used to have meetings and things like that. Right in front the post office, there's a park there. They were a very active group at the time being at least, anyway. I don't know now how active they are, but at those beginning days, they were active.

NC: Now, they have all the workers in the union. As a federal worker, could you join a union?

LT: At those days, no. We haven't a union. Now, you have.

NC: Now the federal workers have a union?

LT: Yeah, yeah. Most of them have the unions to join to.

NC: Is that a union, or is more of a professional organization?
LT: It's a union.

NC: When did that come?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

LT: Around 15 years ago or twenty years ago. Somewhere around there. Was a gradual affair. And now it's a full fledged affair, yes.

NC: Did the workers here in Hawaii ask for a union? Is that how it came?

LT: No, that portion, I don't know. We were just asked to join up the postal union at one time.

NC: I was wondering if there was any influence, at least in Hawaii that certain workers were getting organized into union. I wonder if that had an effect on other workers?

LT: I wouldn't know. Only thing I remember is that when I was a clerk here, they asked me to join this organization. I think, at that time wasn't known as a strong union or anything. When I became a postmaster and then they were asking the clerks to join up with the unions. So, I used to tell the clerks, "Yeah. Join, join. It may be good for you, may be bad for you. I think unions are good, so, make up your mind and join if you want to. But I leave it all up to you folks." It's about before ten years, I think the union was coming in.

NC: How about when there were strikes at the plantation? Did that affect your work at all?

LT: No, no. The funny part of it, we thought the strike is on. On the plantations, we had a couple of strikes, so, we thought our business going to be way low. No, it kept with the normal pace. I think the people have saved up their money in the meantime. They send postal money orders, pay for their things they bought and this and that. And so, it was the same.

NC: When they had very long strikes--like the six months strike in 1946--did you find yourself getting personally involved in any of the activities or in the situation?

LT: No. Well, in that kind of situation like that we have our friends and this and that, but we try not to talk too much about the strike, because we don't want to be personally involved with one group or the other. I'm not in their union, so we being a government workers, we just not to get ourself involved. So we used to talk less about the strike because we figure that those people on strike, if they been having a hard time, one word you say which they don't like, you know what that can cause.

NC: Now, when the plantation started using herbicides by airplane in 1954, were you aware of that having any effect on the community?
LT: No. Only thing I heard is that there was a banana plantation there. They say it was ruined by that herbicide spray which I don't know if that was correct.

NC: And how about where you lived? You were still living in Haleiwa. Did that affect your garden or anything?

LT: No, no.

NC: Now, when Harry Bridges was jailed during his perjury trial in 1950, you know, was that something that was commented upon in the community?

LT: I don't know about the plantation people or the unions. Maybe they go up to the guys, maybe talk something about it, but---of course, Haleiwa is mostly a business community and I don't think so they meddle into somebody's affair or anything, so.

NC: Along the same lines, Mr. Jack Hall and six others were arrested in 1951. The accusation was that they were Communists. Did you personally have any reaction to that?

LT: No. As I say, it didn't bother with my work or it didn't affect my job or anything. Maybe, just what I read in the paper. They didn't say he's a Communist and that's all I know.

NC: Well, I think that was general in the community that there was very little reaction to that. But how about....well, when Senator Eastland was here?

LT: I think I read about it.

NC: He thought Hawaii was too "Japonesey" to be allowed to come in as a state. Were you aware of maybe a reaction in the community about that?

LT: No, no, I doubt it.

NC: Did you have a personal reaction? Thinking about it now, do you think the man was perhaps mistaken or prejudiced?

LT: I don't know. At that time they say they want to become a state. On the other hand is territory. I mean, the state(hood) is a good thing to have, although we, as a territory doing pretty good. So, what's the difference. There is a big difference, now, but at that time....as a territory, we were treated pretty good.

NC: But did it disturb you that Senator Eastland was really prejudiced against the Japanese?

LT: No, he didn't bother me, what he said.

NC: You know, Waialua did have a protest strike on account of him? There was a protest strike in 1956.

LT: Gee, that I wouldn't know. I don't remember that. Almost a hundred
percent shut down to protest the Eastland hearings.

LT: Oh, hearings? Gee, I don't remember that.

NC: Have you been aware of any kind of ethnic prejudice either on purpose or in ignorance, practiced by the plantation management?

LT: No, I'm not aware of that. Any one ethnic group, no.

NC: In the post office during the years you were there, did you have people of different ethnic groups working there?

LT: At the beginning were two. After that, we had about four. We increased little by little. Mostly it was Japanese people who were placed in the clerks, and when I came in I hired one Filipino girl as a substitute clerk. I don't know if she's still there. The post office came a little higher, so we had a little fringe benefits. (Laughs) We could hire one janitor, so I hired one Filipino boy as a janitor for a couple of hours a day. Being just a few people that we couldn't...cause they have such thing as regulation EO, Equal Opportunity Law.

NC: And they have another one. Affirmative action.

(Laughter)

LT: So, we used to try it. But at the beginning, we didn't have those things. So, just the postmaster and I, so. Then the one girl we hired. She was transferred from Haleiwa Post Office to our post office, so she was a clerk there.

It's not that we try to hire somebody different than our nationality, but circumstances was such that at the time...well, the other nationalities, they didn't come in and ask if there's this opening or anything. But this Filipino girl, she came. She just came from the Philippine Islands about two years ago at the time. One day, somebody told me here, "Somebody want to see you." "Is she looking for a job?" We had a opening at that time for a substitute position,

NC: So, she had the initiative and she got the job.

LT: Yeah.

NC: When some of the other mills closed down, did you notice people--well, I don't know if there was any way that you could tell that people from Ewa or Kahuku were moving in to the area.

LT: No. I don't think I ever heard of these Kahuku employees coming to work at Waialua Plantation. Maybe there was one or two, but not that I know of.

NC: Now, you moved to Wahiawa a few years ago, but before that, for like the 15 years before that, did you see anything really different or anything really changing in the area in Waialua-Haleiwa? Did anything
strike you that way?

LT: Yeah. One is more of the young people used to leave the Waialua community. Coming up to Wahiawa or Honolulu to work. So, they come up to Wahiawa, buy their home, work at Schofield, Pearl Harbor or Honolulu. So, the young people start moving out. A lot of them did...

NC: You mean the plantation young people?

LT: Plantation and the outsiders. Haleiwa section. Because by the time already, everything was unionized. Outsiders, the carpenters was having more. The plumbers was having more. The electrician was having more than what the plantation used to pay, and they thought the other side, the grass is greener. I think they did pretty good, because a few of them, they bought their own home. And they doing pretty good.

NC: Do you think that those young people had more education?

LT: No, no. I don't think so. They just went maybe, to Waialua High and that's about it, I guess.

NC: So, they had more education than their parents, but not more education than the young people who stayed?

LT: Yeah, because the others, they stayed maybe for security reason. They figure out that staying with the plantation is more secured, and that the parents are there. So they have to take care their parents. They have plantation houses, all kind of reasons.

NC: Do you think that Waialua and Haleiwa are good places for raising children?

LT: Yes, I think it is. I think Haleiwa-Waialua are very nice place to raise children. Of course, it's not the way it used to be, because all the people start coming down and buying the beachlot and building up the house. You have lot of condominiums or apartments coming up, and you have these pension people coming in. In and out, in and out. But, as a whole, it's really, really nice. It's the old, easy-going country life. (Laughs)

NC: Have you noticed in Haleiwa, like across the street from the community there, it says Waialua Community Center, but it's in Haleiwa. You notice the front of the building standing up? Two of the wooden buildings. Just the fronts are standing up.

LT: You mean, right in front of the Community Association?

NC: Well, a little bit before you get to the Community Association. Across the street from it is a service station. Then going down, there's the end two buildings. It looks like there's nothing left in back of them.

LT: (Laughs) No, there's a back. I think the back is something like a room
in a house or something, I guess.

NC: I was going to ask you if you knew if there were any plans to restore those buildings or anything like that.

LT: Once, they had that... the old buildings or old something to do with whether you could have it...

NC: Oh, historic sites?

LT: Yeah, all historic sites or something. Old buildings and this and that, but I don't think so they found any in Haleiwa, I guess.

NC: So, you don't think any have been marked for restoration?

LT: No, I doubt it.

NC: Is there anything there that you would like to see preserved of the things that are getting very old?

LT: If I want to see what's preserved was the old Haleiwa Hotel which has been torn down long ago. It was a beautiful hotel. Something like a colonial structure.

NC: Why was it torn down?

LT: They closed up that place. They had no use for it.

NC: Is something else there now?

LT: Yeah. The old Sea View Inn Restaurant.

NC: When you compare your life now with, say, your life in 1920s and '30s...

LT: Or '40s. (Laughs)

NC: Well, let's say, thirty or forty years ago. In terms of material comforts, freedom, and relationships with people in the community, how would you compare...

LT: With the present? Well, you know, they always say the good old days. (Laughs) That's a saying. And I think that's the good old days. People fifty years from now will say the good old days was maybe 1976. But, no. Actually speaking, of course, I'm not that go-go type, so, I think I really enjoy the early years. Everything was so easy-going. The community—not only the neighbors—but the whole community was so friendly like and so neighborly like.

Of course, we didn't have all the comforts like today we have, but we didn't mind, because we thought that's all we have. So we made it go. That's it. So, we didn't crave for anything. Maybe, when I was a kid, only thing I craved for was a bicycle. That's about all. It was such an easy life.
Being the country, you could just get out of the house, leave your doors open and you don't have to worry. People were nice all around. In other words, every racial group used to be nice to each other. We had lot of Hawaiian people. Get Hawaiians there and few sprinkle of Chinese old people. And we got along fine. We played with the Hawaiian kids, and it wasn't bad at all. I don't know now. Now, maybe, the life is a little too fast, I guess.

Compared to the old days, we didn't have the automobiles and things like that. But if we had those things, well, maybe the same thing. But we just didn't have those things.

Of course, advancement of civilization or advancement of science and you have talkies. Those days was the silent movie. William S. Hart, or something. Old cowboy star. I used to like him. William Hart and all those old cowboy actors.

NC: Where did you used to go see those movies?

LT: Haleiwa Theatre. You know that theatre there by that community center? That's the one structure. That theatre.

NC: How much did it cost to go to the movies when you were a kid?

LT: Ten cents, I think.

NC: Did you go often, or....

LT: No, not too often. Not even once a week.

NC: Was there any such thing as the kiddies' matinee on Saturday?

LT: Kiddies' matinee, no. We used to go in the evenings. It was all small little kids, but, we used to group together and walk down about a mile down from our town so that we could have a good time, walk back together.

NC: Was there any such thing as stopping for a candy or an ice cream soda?

LT: Not those days.

(Laughter)

NC: In fact, was there an ice cream parlor in town?

LT: Not in the sense of a parlor, but they used to sell ice cream. The stores like that. But we weren't exposed to those things, so we didn't just care. Like now, at home they buy these ice cream by the cartons and everything and come back and feed the kids. So the kids like that. Those days, we didn't care whether had ice
cream or not.

NC: Oh, so you didn't have ice cream so often?

LT: No. Some homes, once in a while, they used to make their own ice cream in a old grinder. With the milk and the rock salt or something. They grind the whole thing and we make ice cream. And then right across our house, we used to have this candy man. He used to make his own candy and ice cream. And his little truck goes around the camp, goes all around selling those candies and goodies. Those were the days. (Laughs)

NC: Did they have shave ice in those days?

LT: We have shave ice. And we used to have a saimin peddler. That was just a small little truck he had. He used to peddle sainin. Late in the evenings.

NC: Was there any kind of grocery store?

LT: No. A few of the stores was maybe clothing store, but most of them was a general store, so they used to carry practically everything. From onions to potatoes and little this and that. Can goods.

NC: For example, if your mother wanted fruit, she could buy it in the same store? You had pork at home you could slaughter, but...

LT: Yeah. But we used to go buy pork. Hate to slaughter one whole pig for a few pound of pork. Fruit shop, we never had any fruit shop, because the only thing I can remember is eating mangoes, papayas, and oranges, and pineapple.

NC: Did you buy them, or were they just available?

LT: Well, papayas and mangoes and plums, like that--especially papaya tree--was in everybody's yard. Then we had bananas and we had plums. I don't know if you remember those plums, the purple joe. We had plums. We used to go up the valley to pick up rose apples. And stye apples. There's a tree right by the old Haleiwa Hotel, Sea View Inn, now. There's a big tree out by that back entrance. Was the stye apple tree. Yeah, and they had all kind of mangos. Different varieties of mangos. We had a lot of fruits, so we didn't crave too much. Once in a while we used to have apples. The stores used to have apples and oranges. Not those fancy strawberries and all those things, no. Didn't taste a strawberry.

NC: Did your parents belong to a particular religion?

LT: Yes, they were Buddhists. The Shinto sect.

NC: I think that we did mention that. But you have not kept that same....
LT: No. No.

NC: You are on a different religion?

LT: I'm on a different religion.

NC: And what is the name of that?

LT: It's the Church of World Messianity.

NC: Do you mind if we talk about it a little bit?

LT: Sure, go right ahead.

NC: Is this a Japanese religion?

LT: Yeah, it's a relatively new religion. I think it was founded in Japan about forty or 45 years ago. It came into Hawaii about 25 years ago. So it's a relatively new religion. It's neither Buddhism or Shintoism. It's both of them. It's a combined stuff. Well, those are long, legal explanation to that, but we more on the Shinto side. The ceremony, services and this and that.

They tell us that you can belong to any religion you want and still come into this religion, and you don't have to throw away your religion. What you believe in. If you're a Buddhist, you can be a Buddhist or you can be a Protestant. It's alright. You can still join this church, because it says it's more than a religion. 'Cause religion is part of this movement. So, okay. It's alright.

NC: So in the Buddhist religion, you have your altar with your ancestor tablets. But in your Messianity religion, I don't see any ancestor tablets.

LT: No, no. As I say, it's a combination of both. So, in other words, we believe that scroll there is Divine Light. It's a Divine Light program. In other words, in the one God, Supreme God, Creator of the Universe. He's the Divine Light.

NC: In the Buddhist religion, there are certain rituals that you are to perform. Does this new religion also give you a set of rituals that you are to perform?

LT: Not exactly. Of course, when we pray, the only thing the ritual is we clap our hands three times and bow. Then, we have our prayers, poems. Poems, but it's just songs. It's not like a Buddhist where you have all the from beginning to end ritual, you know. It's not like that. So on this side, I don't have incense or anything like that. We just put up flowers. On this side, you have ritual. You have incense there and tablets and everything.

NC: Now you told me about your mother making the offer of the first bit of anything, like the first bit of the rice or when she made something
special. Are you asked to do anything similar?

LT: No. Every morning and evening you pray. Then, once a month, there's, as you say, a ritual. You might say a ritual that we put up the offering. The offering is not like the Buddhist. They have a small tray made out. What we offer is rice, salt, water, and sake. You know, Shintoism is always sake. Shinto religion, they offer fish, so we have fish. One plate of fish and one plate of Japanese mochi. Well, that's all we put up there every month. Our churches have monthly service only.

NC: So, is there a church towe...

LT: In Wahiawa. A branch church here. They have just a monthly service. In Honolulu, the mother church have once a month service.

NC: Does it have a minister?

LT: Yes, a minister.

NC: About how many ministers in Hawaii?

LT: There's one minister in Honolulu. One in Maui. One in Hawaii. One in Kauai. One, Wahiawa. We have about five ministers and three assistant ministers.

NC: And do you have any idea how many members there are in this state?

LT: I think it's about approximately about two thousand.

NC: So, it's a small group?

LT: Yeah, it's a small group. Two thousand. And we have a church in San Francisco.

NC: Do you ever have conferences with everybody in Hawaii? Or ever go to a conference with the different churches?

LT: No, no. We don't have that. Once a year, we have a big gathering. The whole island people come up and that's about all. As I say we have a church in Frisco. We just lately have one in Vancouver, in Brazil. Brazil, we have a whole bunch.

NC: Have a lot of Japanese in Brazil?

LT: No, it's mostly Brazilians. Maybe it's about ten thousand or...

NC: I was going to ask you in Vancouver, was it started by a Japanese, or is it Canadians?

LT: Well, I think it's a Japanese minister there. But I think the members are Canadians. The same thing like San Francisco. Over about eighty or ninety percent is Caucasian members.
NC: And you don't think that in Brazil it might be second, third generation Japanese?

LT: No, I think it's mostly Brazilians. When we have a big service or occasion at the mother church in Japan—once a year they have a certain day that's a big occasion—we have plenty people from Brazil going over there.

NC: So you've gone over to the one in Japan?

LT: Yeah, I have a visit about four, five times there. They have Brazilians and they have some haole people from San Francisco, L.A., and from Hawaii. They have Filipino people going over there from Hawaii, and there's Chinese. Oh, we have all kind of nationality now. I hope it's going to be that way from now. More outsiders than if it's only Japanese.

NC: You really are going world-wide.

LT: Yeah, this is a world-wide organization. We're thinking in terms of world-wide. I haven't gone when they had this big occasion with all the people from South American and all like that. But, I hear, when the South American delegation go over there, ho, they liven up that place with their rhumba or songs and everything. I guess they just go to town and liven up everything. (Laughs)

NC: What does it offer you that's different from what Buddhism offers you? Have you given up Buddhism or is that still part of what you have?

LT: It's part of me. From when I was start to know things, the parents was just worshipping Buddhism. Then, I went to high school, and for four years I was—I wouldn't say I was a Christian, but I went to Christian Service every evening or every morning that we had service. And every Sunday, we have to go to church. So, I was under Christian for a while, taking up Christianity, and got out of school. My parents went away, so, I took care of their altar. And this new religion came in. You know, this Buddhist religion something like—Haleiwa have a different sects of Buddhism. About four or five different churches, of different sects of Buddhism. And the old Japanese people goes to every church when they have occasion.

(Laughter)

LT: And when they die, they call up the whole church minister to come and do the service. But most of the time, the other church minister come to the funeral, too, to help conduct the service. So that's the way it goes. I would say it's kind of intermingled. Because our religion says that you should take care of your ancestors, But ancestors are over the bridge, and so we go put the incense and pray for them. I'm not that religious, or....(Laughs)

NC: But you seem to find great satisfaction....
LT: Well, I feel the satisfaction but I think it's... what I can understand is in simple terms that I can understand. Buddhist here, the minister come and give the prayer. I don't understand his prayers. Lot of it's change, I suppose.

NC: Is it an ancient form of Japanese?

LT: Yeah, ancient form of Japanese, the prayers. But, like our prayers, the prayers plus songs and things like that you can understand, more or less.

NC: And so when you're here, this is conducted in English or in Japanese?

LT: Any way you want to conduct. So sometime, out there, pray for something, and I get stuck in my Japanese way of asking, I tell it into English. I figure, being a Supreme God, He should know my feelings.

(Laughter)

NC: Now, did your sisters, who also stayed after your parents and your three older sisters went to Japan....

LT: One came back, and two stayed.

NC: The ones who stayed, did they marry and have families?

LT: Yeah, they married that time.

NC: And so how about your nieces and nephews? Have they stayed in Hawaii?

LT: Not all. Some of them is on the Mainland.

NC: Have they gone to live over there?

LT: Yeah, on the Mainland. They have their own families.

NC: Now the two sisters who stayed in Japan, when you've gone over there, you've been to see them?

LT: Yeah.

NC: Did they have children?

LT: Yes.

NC: All the children stayed in Japan, or what?

LT: No. One sister had one girl. She got married recently. The other one had two girls. One girl got married in Japan. And the other daughter is in Hawaii now.

NC: Your parents were adventurous enough to come over here. You were born here and you made a go of it over here. I was just wondering how that influenced the family. That's why I asked.

LT: I would say all the Japanese people, they like to come to Hawaii. Every one of them, once they come Hawaii, boy, they say, "I have to go Hawaii.
I have to live in Hawaii," I says, "What you folks want to come in Hawaii for?" I says, "You folks have just as beautiful country as you have. Like we like to see snow once in a while and we like to feel this spring once in a while, but we can't do it. We have the same kind of wea...." "Yeah, but the weather is so perfect. Hoo! The air is so good!" I says, "Oh, if you go in Japan up the mountains, it's just as good, actually." (Laughs)

END OF INTERVIEW
WAIALUA & HALEIWA

The People

Tell Their Story

Volume VII

JAPANESE

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, MANOA

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