BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Edith Kiyoko (Anzai) Yonenaka, 64, retired storeowner and postmistress

Edith Kiyoko (Anzai) Yonenaka, the fourth of ten children, was born in Kahana Valley, Oahu, on January 2, 1919, to an immigrant couple from Fukushima-ken, Japan. Her father, who arrived in the Islands in ca. 1911, worked at Kahuku Plantation prior to his raising rice, sugarcane, and vegetables in Kahana Valley, and Kaaawa. Her mother, a picture bride, tended to the children and household chores.

As a young girl, Edith helped with household chores and attended Kaaawa School. After completing the eighth grade, she worked for a Kaaawa Japanese-language school teacher for a year and Haga Store in Waialua for three years.

In August 1941, she and members of her family started the Kaaawa Vegetable Stand which prospered with the patronage of U.S. military personnel during World War II.

In 1952, Edith married and also began her 28-year career as Kaaawa's postmistress.

Since retiring in 1980, Edith has devoted her time to community activities, gardening, and selling Avon products.
MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Edith Kiyoko (Anzai) Yonenaka, at her home in Kaaawa, Hawaii on June 2, 1983.

MK: Okay, Mrs. Yonenaka, can you tell me when and where you were born?

EY: I was born in Kahana Valley on January 2, 1919.

MK: And how many children were there in your family?

EY: There were ten of us.

MK: And what number were you?

EY: I was the fourth in the family.

MK: You told me that you were the only daughter in the family. What was it like being the only girl in the family?

EY: Well, it's hard to say but you know ever since I was small I was the only girl, so I got used to it. I didn't think anything of it, except that I used to envy my friends who had big sisters. But my brothers were all nice to me and they worried about me too, they cared for me. My father never showed any favoritism or anything, but I'm sure that he loved me a lot and he worried about me more than any of the boys.

MK: What makes you say that that he worried a lot about you?

EY: Well, there were a lot of bachelors up in the valley and by the I time started school there weren't very
many girls. I think there were only about two other girls, maybe one or two other girls. Because of all the bachelors, we used to walk on this road you know, the narrow road with cane fields on both sides. Well, he worried about me. I remember many times when we'd be walking home from school. I'd see him coming down from the valley. (laughs) He just walked past us, but I knew that he came down just to check on me (laughs) to make sure that none of the boys were taking advantage of me, you know. He worried about me.

MK: And how about in terms of chores within the family. What kind of chores did you have to do?

EY: Well, we used to go out and help in the garden and carry water from the well into the house, into the kitchen, where we used to have a barrel where we had to fill up the barrel every day, so mom could use that for washing dishes and carrying firewood. My biggest job was caring for my little brothers. Carrying them on my back, taking care of them. That was the biggest job for me anyway. My brothers used to help on the farm. But we also had time for play too.

MK: Those days, what did you folks do for play?

EY: For play we used to do a lot of swimming. We had--there was a stream there, Kahana Stream. We used to go fishing a lot. I used to catch 'opae a lot. My brothers used to go look for oopus, especially right after the storm you know, the rain storm. Then the ops would come down from way inside (the valley) they would be washed down so they [EY's brothers] would go down and catch a lot of them. Then we used to go up in the mountains a lot, ti leaf sliding, that was one of my favorites. And then there used to be areas where the dirt got--I mean not the dirt, but the grass got washed away. There were bare spots--we used to go there and take our tin cans and things like that and make little cars and trains and things like--make trails, and uh--play up there. And another thing we used to do, play ball. We didn't have balls, so you know what we used to use? You know Durham bags, tobacco bags, we used to fill that up with grass and use that for a ball.

(Laughter)

MK: Those days, who were your playmates?

EY: Well, mostly my brothers but there was another girl in the camp. In fact there were two, but one of them, the
family moved away, so I had another girl but she was a little older than I was. She didn't go and play like the way we used to, like tomboys. But she used to play dolls. I used to play with her. She had a beautiful doll. In those days we had these, uh--I don't know what they are made of but, the body, the head and the hands and the legs were, uh.... What was it made out of? Something like clay, but it's not really clay, and the body parts all stuffed with straw. That's the only kind of doll that I had. But she had this beautiful doll with real hair, you know. Oh! I used to envy that. Then when she grew up she gave it to me and I really cherished it.

(Laughter)

Oh, we used to play with dolls all the time. We used to make our own (doll) clothes and play with broken dishes, you know pieces of dishes, and tin cans to make plates and cups and things like that. That's how we used to play.

MK: And you know that you were talking about your father a little while ago, I was wondering what do you remember about his own background, especially in Japan and his coming over to Hawaii?

EY: My father, he was a quiet man. A man of few words I used to say. He hardly talked to us about things like that, so he never told us anything, but my mother used to tell us. He was married before he came to Hawaii but his wife had died and left two children and he was the only child in the family, and so probably was hard for him to support the children and his mother too, so that's what I think made him come to Hawaii. Then when he came to Hawaii my mother came as picture bride and they started having children, so he never had enough money to go home, but he used to send some money to his mother so that she could live on it and take care of his two children. But one of his children died. If I'm not mistaken he drowned, or something like that. Anyway he died, and so he [EY's father] only had this daughter left. I don't think he had any other relatives. I never heard of them.

MK: Did you ever get to meet your half sister?

EY: No, by the time we went to Japan--that was in 1971--she had already passed away. But we met her son. Yeah, that was really nice. I couldn't get to see his sisters [EY's nieces], but I met him and that was
really nice, yeah. I'd like to go back again and meet my nieces.

MK: What ken did your parents come from?

EY: Fukushima-ken.

MK: That's the ken famous for their Bon Odori, huh?

EY: I don't know.

(Laughter)

I know that they used to make fun of the way they talked. They called it the zuru-zuru [A dialect with many "z" sounds.] The way they talk, eh. Something like that they used to say.

MK: Can you sort of demonstrate how their ben was, their dialect was?

EY: Uh, I remember one thing, one word clearly, yabashare. You never heard of it? Yabashare means come. Yabashare, yabashare, I remember that one. But my folks didn't speak too much of that Fukushima-ken dialect. So I never got to learn any, but I remember that yabashare very well.

(Laughter)

MK: Your mother was a picture bride, yeah? What did she talk about, about her experiences as a picture bride?

EY: She never said much, but she used to tell us about her family and my father's family. That's how I learn about my father being married before, and about his children, because he never talked about any of those things. He was really an unusually quiet man.

Even as we were growing up, I remember him scolding the boys (by saying just a few words). (Laughs) But you know, he was amazing. I don't remember him ever hitting any of the kids. But, every time any of them got out of hand, he would yell at somebody and say, "Bō mottekoi, bō mottekoi," get the stick. And he'd just grab it and that's it. You know, make like he's going to hit, and the kids would all just quiet down or take off or something. I'll never forget one time, I don't know what I did. I must have been teasing one of my younger brothers. He told me not to do it, but I kept on doing it, so he got the newspaper, rolled up
newspaper, and he came up to me and he just wacked me, tapped me (lightly) like that, you know, and that hurt me inside! I really cried.

(Laughter)

That's the only time I remember when he really hit me but it was such a gentle tap, really didn't hurt me physically.

My mother was so busy taking care of all the kids. She never had much time to talk story, but at night she would. But still even at night while she was feeding the family, she would go and take a bath, furo, you know. Then she would eat her dinner after she came back from furo. Then after that she would wash the dishes. So by the time she got through, most of us were ready to go to bed. She really worked hard that lady. (To do the laundry, too.) We had this wooden barrel right near the well. From the well she would get the water and put it in there, and wash. To rinse it, she would take all the clothes in a bucket, put it on a wheel barrel and take it down to the river and rinse it there so she wouldn't have to keep getting the water from the well. That was kind of hard work. It was such a rainy place that the clothes, the diapers wouldn't get dry fast enough and she would have to string it up inside the kitchen, right by the fire. Then I remember her carrying the baby on her back and then wrap her head with a towel, so the baby (wouldn't) pull her hair. And she would be going like this (EY imitates mother carrying a child on her back.), cooking and the baby is crying on her back. Oh, she really worked hard. Yeah, she really worked hard. Besides she took care of a garden too, because we had to raise our own vegetables for food. And raise chickens too and the pigs. She really worked hard.

MK: During those nights, what did you folks do during the nights? Now days we have TV and everything, but those days what were you folks doing?

EY: Oh, mostly play cards and checkers and things like that. But during the week, you know we'd do our homework and study.

MK: You mentioned that sometimes your mother would talk about her family. What did she say about her family background, back in Fukushima-ken?

EY: She didn't say too much. But seems like they had a pretty nice house. They were farming, I think, raising
uh—rice, growing rice. She had several brothers and two sisters. I don't know how many brothers she had. When we went to Japan, we met two of the brothers, one brother she never met. She was already here when he was born. She said that they used to spend a lot of time cleaning house, you know, getting on their hands and knees, and polishing the floors and things like that, so I don't think she worked in the fields. I'm not sure. I don't remember too much. I don't think she said too much about Japan days. I don't remember too well what she used to say.

MK: Then let's see, what was your father doing in Kahana Valley? How did he get there?

EY: When he first came, he was in Kahuku at the plantation and from there they moved to (Pupukea), up in the hills, in the pineapple fields. That's where he used to work. Then they moved to Kahana. By the time they moved to Kahana they had two children and he grew rice, where he had a rice patch. Then after that, they turned that field into a sugarcane field and used to grow sugarcane.

MK: Do you remember much about the time when he was growing rice?

EY: No, I don't. By the time I remember, it was all sugarcane. Probably my big brother would remember, but I don't remember.

MK: Growing that sugarcane, what kind of work was he involved in?

EY: Well, he leased the land from the Kahuku Plantation and they had workers living in the camp. They were hired actually by the camp boss. He would let the other farmers use the same workers because when he got through with all his work, then he would let them work for the other farmers, and that's how my father used to get help from the workers there. He used to do a lot of work too with the regular guys, like plowing the field with the horse, and planting, and then harvesting. Also, they used to cut off the top of the sugarcane to plant the new crop. (After every harvest they'd plow the land) again and plant again. The harvesting was hard too because they used to have to tie the bundles of sugarcane and climb up the ladder to pack it onto the train cars. And during the harvest time, they used to lay the tracks in right through the fields, so that they could bring the cars in from the depot. They used to pull it by horse.
MK: You mentioned that there were other people in that camp. What kind of people were in that camp?

EY: We had some Japanese, mostly Filipino bachelors. There was one Filipino family for a while. Oh, there was one Korean family too, one Korean, and about three or four Japanese families in the camp. The rest were all bachelors, Filipino bachelors.

MK: What was the name of the camp?

EY: Tanaka Camp. He was the headman there. We called him the boss, the camp boss.

MK: Did the Japanese come from all different kens, or were they Fukushima-kén people?

EY: No, they (were) all different. I don't know where they were from, but they weren't (from) Fukushima.

MK: You know, in terms of pay, how were they paid for their work?

EY: I think the (Kahuku) plantation paid them, I'm not too sure. After harvest anyway, they [i.e., the plantation] would pay them, but in the mean time [i.e., between harvests], I think the plantation used to pay them. Then (after) the harvest, they'd deduct whatever they had paid out and then the balance would come to my father.

MK: Do you remember any of the women working in the fields too?

EY: Yes.

MK: What were they doing?

EY: There's the hō hana, you know, weeding, and planting and some of them used to load the railroad cars with the sugarcane.

MK: Did you ever go out and help in the sugarcane fields?

EY: Yeah, when we were a little older, we used to go out and work during the summer months, hō hana. Yeah, I think it was fifty cents a day or something like that we used to get. That was big money to us.

(Laughter)

MK: What did you think about the work though?
EY: Well, to make money, that was the main thing for us. So we did it, but a lot of times we would goof off. When the boss was not around, we'd go out and then somebody would say "Hey, the boss coming, boss coming," and we'd all start work.

(Laughter)

MK: So you had a luna then who would watch?

EY: Not really, the camp boss used to come around once in a while, he would come around once in a while just to check on us. I think he was just being nice giving us this job, just to help us out, I think. He didn't really need us. He didn't have to hire us, but he did that just to help us out.

MK: Since it was like a camp type situation, did you and the rest of your family participate in camp activities outside of work?

EY: No, we didn't have too many activities. The Filipinos used to have their celebrations. Rizal Day! And we used to have cockfighting and that's about all. The Japanese never did anything special, no, they never did. Except on New Year's Day. They used to celebrate New Year's several days in a row. And everybody would make lots of food and we go from house to house just to greet them, you know. And then we'd eat a little food and go to the next house. Everybody used to do that. Even the Filipinos used to come over and share the food and wish us, "Happy New Year," and things like that too. And at Christmas time, some of the Hawaiians in the lower part of the camp, they used to come up and sing carols. And then we'd donate a few cents to them, you know. That's about the only things that I can remember. We didn't have any other activities until we started going to school. Then at the school they used to have the Emperor's Day, you know, birthday celebration, and graduation. Then graduation time, we'd all pack lunches and go down there and have a picnic.

MK: Is that Japanese [-language] school?

EY: Japanese school, um hum.

MK: And how did you folks celebrate Emperor's Day, the Emperor's birthday those days?
EY: Well, we'd have some kind of ceremony and everybody would stand up, and there would be his picture and we'd all bow down, way down (to) our knees!

(Laughter)

And they'd sing songs and then they would give us soda and manjū. Oh, that was a treat that manjū! (Laughs) Manjū sometimes—no, no mochi in those days, mochi was only once a year. We used to pound mochi once a year for New Year's, a few days before New Year's. Everybody in the camp would get together and pound mochi. I remember making that mochi, with the little an inside and I remember making those things too.

MK: Gee, you know when you celebrated the Emperor's birthday, what kind of meaning did it have for you?

EY: Nothing! You'd just have to bow down that's all I remember, that's all I remember!

(Laughter)

MK: And like for New Year's Day, those days, what kinds of food did all the households make and share with each other?

EY: We used to make sushi, and morimono they used to call it. Morimono, you know. They'd have a platter with kamaboko, and orange and kanten, tempura, and what else? Anyway, all these goodies they'd pack on a big plate and, nishime and a lot of vegetable dishes because you know we didn't have any meat, maybe some chicken, but it was always cooked with something else. And probably namasu, um, that's all I can remember.

MK: How does that New Year's Day food compare with your everyday food?

EY: Oh! That was a treat! We never saw oranges all year long. Only on Christmas and New Year's, that's all. Oranges and apples and yōkan and kanten. My mama used to make that, kanten and yōkan, all those things. Kamaboko we had to buy. But, kamaboko and chikuwa and tempura. Tempura she used to make too. Mostly sweet potato and vegetable tempura. We never had those things every day, so that was a treat!

MK: What was considered like, everyday food?

EY: Oh, we used to eat a lot of beans, aka mame.

(Laughter)
And codfish, they'd cook it with a little bit sugar. That was the main thing. My father used to buy eggs, Mainland eggs by the case. A lot of times the eggs would be rotten so we'd have to be careful. Every one we'd break, we break into a bowl and make sure it's all right before we mix it in with the others. And every time I beat the eggs, I hear that sound, and it reminds me of the old days, (laughs) I used to hear my mom beating those eggs. Oh! I used to eat eggs all the time. That was one of our main dishes, eggs and that aka mame. And lots of vegetables from our garden. Every once in a while, we would have chicken that we raised.

Pig is another thing. Everybody, (no,) not everybody, but there were some people who used to raise pigs too and we used to raise ours. So when one family kills the pig, they'd go around and sell it to the neighbors. It was really cheap, I forgot how much it was, but it was really cheap. Then to preserve that, my mother used to put it in a crock and she'd melt the fat of the pork, and pour that inside, so that you seal it, I guess to make it airtight and preserve it. Every now and then she'd dig it out and use that until it was all gone. Then maybe when the next person killed the pig, then we would do the same thing, buy [pork]. That's about the only kind of meat that we had. Very, very seldom we had meat! The only time we had beef was when somebody would come and visit us and bring us a piece, that's about all. You know how it is, the Japanese they always bring omiyage. Oh, we used to look forward to people from the city coming out to visit us.

(Laughter)

They would bring candy or something. Oh! We used to look forward to that!

MK: How often would somebody say from Honolulu come out to visit you folks?

EY: Not too often, but maybe once in three, four months maybe. Sometimes only some people, we never saw, except maybe once a year. Like during the summer, you know there were a lot of mountain apple trees up there. So people used to come up from town to pick mountain apples and they used to have (a Japanese-language school) in Haleiwa. The teachers used to bring the children by the bus. And they needed somebody to take them up, show them where the trees were. So, we used
to go up and show them where. The visitors always brought something for us. Then we had a friend too that used to live around here some place. His wife had died and he had a son I think, yeah a son and a daughter, I'm not sure. But anyway, they had (grown and) left, and he was home by himself. So he used to come over all the time and he used to bring all kinds of presents for us. But mostly girl's things, because you know to buy for all the boys, it would be too much! (Laughs) So that's why I used to get a lot of dolls and toys from him. Oh! Then when I took them to school, like the dishes and things like that, Oh! I was so proud of it. (Laughs)

MK: And where was he buying all these things?

EY: He used to go to town to buy those things. He was really nice. He was taking care of a yard for somebody down here.

MK: Those days, what was it like when you or your brothers or your mom or dad got to go to town?

EY: Well, my mama very seldom went to town [i.e., Honolulu], but my father used to go every once in a while, especially when my brothers started working. He used to go into town once a month on this taxi that used to run from Kahuku— and he would do his month’s shopping there. But before he goes, you know about a week or so before he goes, he used to make me write a letter to my brothers telling them exactly when he would be there and they would wait for him and have the money ready, so that he can do his shopping. One time I forgot to mail the letter and my brothers didn't get it. So my father went all the way into town and (laughs) my brothers were not ready for him. He came back and he didn't scold me or anything, but he said "You know you didn't mail that letter," (laughs) so he had to go back again.

MK: In those days, what kind of things did you buy in town to bring back?

EY: Used to buy rice, and that's two 100-pound bags of rice, one big tub of miso, tub full of shōyu and crackers. He used to buy crackers you know, crackers by the case. He used to buy big box of crackers. And some canned stuff, sugar and salt, I suppose. I remember only the good things! (Like the can of cookies that he used to buy once in a while.)

(Laughter)
MK: Those days what was the transportation like from here into town?

EY: There weren't very many cars. The camp boss had a car and we had to depend on the taxis. So, before that, I know they used to go in by wagon, with the horse you know. It used to be an overnight trip. We had a wagon too. But by the time I was old enough to remember, well, we hardly used that except for on the farm, you know, carrying fertilizer or potatoes, or whatever we harvested. That's all we used it for. I remember having a horse too (that was used to plow the fields). But we didn't have that horse very long either.

Then once every summer, my father used to take all of us to town. All of us, not only our family, but the neighborhood kids too (that was used to plow the fields). And we'd all pile up in this car, usually the taxi he hired for the day. He'd take us to the zoo, the aquarium, and the museum. Places like that he used to take us every summer. And we'd all pile up in that car. That was a treat for us!

MK: You mentioned earlier a railroad depot. How did that work?

EY: It used to come from Kahuku to Kahana. It was mostly to haul the sugarcane, but they also took passengers to Kahuku. And eventually it went around the island so we could catch the train, go to Kahuku and from there, go around the island to town. My father, maybe he went when I was very young, he used to do that too, but I don't remember him catching the train.

MK: Just before, you mentioned that you had a horse and wagon for your farm. How big was your farm?

EY: Oh, that wasn't very big. I don't remember too well, using the horse and the wagon, but I know he used to use it for hauling fertilizer and things like that. But at that time, we had the sugarcane field, so they must have been using it when they had the rice patch. I don't know how many acres the rice patch was, but it was right in the back of our house.

MK: I think you said that later on, after he finished farming sugarcane, he started farming something else.

EY: Yes.

MK: What was he farming then?
EY: I remember him raising ginger, you know that shōga ginger, way up in the valley and araimo. Then from there, he got another piece of land further down away from our camp. He never used the sugarcane field for his other farming. That's where we used to raise cabbage. I don't remember too many things. I remember weeding, helping him weeding in the garden. Probably he planted araimo too and some other vegetables, but I don't remember too well about what he grew besides those two. But I remember the whole family used to go down and work there. My mother would pack lunch for all of us, so it was like a picnic for us, for me, anyway. (Laughs)

Right next to that there were a lot of trees, so we used to have our lunch under those trees and after lunch we'd climb trees and play in that area.

MK: Did your father employ any other people to help with his farming?

EY: No, no, the boys used to help him and my mother.

MK: And when he harvested all the vegetables, what did he do with the vegetables?

EY: I don't know. He must have had somebody take it into town [Honolulu], I'm sure.

MK: Do you know how he got the land to do that though, to do the truck farming on the side?

EY: I'm pretty sure he must have leased it from either Kahuku plantation or the Wards you know, the owner of the land, the Foster family, I think it was, Foster family. I'm not too sure, because I was too young to remember those things.

MK: The Foster family, the ones who own Kualoa Ranch.

EY: No, they owned only Kahana Valley. Kualoa Ranch was owned by the Swanzy family. Swanzy I remember.

MK: So the Fosters had the land up in Kahana Valley, and the Swanzys had the land in this Kaaawa area.

EY: Um hum [Yes].

MK: And I was just wondering you know, Kahana Valley's kinda big right? I was wondering, what part of the valley did your family live in?
EY: Oh, when you look up in the valley it's on the left side. And then on the lower right-hand side there was another little village there, where a lot of other people lived.

MK: What were the people on the right side of the valley doing?

EY: They were mostly Hawaiians living there. They (fished and) had taro patches. There was one Japanese family who had a store and I think they had a farm—sugarcane field too. There was a Chinese family who had another store there too, but the rest were mostly Filipinos, and there was another Japanese family further in, the Furuyas. And the Higashis was another one. There was another family living way inside the valley. You know, at one time it was a pineapple field up there. In fact, there were several people (living) there. It was a camp there, pineapple camp. I don't remember them too well.

MK: How about on your side of the valley, what was there?

EY: They had several homes, and then they had these barracks-like buildings for the bachelors. The bachelors' homes were just long homes with rooms, and then they had another building right below that was the kitchen. The bachelors lived in just the one room. And then we were living way on the right side, on the lower side. We were the only ones on that side. The rest of them, they lived up on the upper side.

MK: Did you folks have a community furo?

EY: Yes, yes. We had our own furo, but it was such a job for my mom and dad to get all the firewood, so we gave it up. [Instead,] we used to go to the community furo where we used to pay, I think so much a month. Everybody used to pay so much a month. I don't remember how much. Then it was right next to the stream, so that they had a pump, and they used to pump the water from the stream into the furo. Sometimes when the pump broke down, they had to go down and carry by bucketfuls. That was a job. And then the firewood—the camp boss would take his workers up in the mountains, you know, alongside the stream, and chop the wood, put it in the river, and let the river bring it all the way down. They would have sticks put in right by where the furo is, so that all the wood would get caught right there and they'd have a gang bringing it out of the water, stacking it right next to the furo.
MK: Gee, that's good thinking yeah?

EY: Yeah, really.

(Laughter)

MK: How about a store or some place that could show movies or something in this camp? Anything like that?

EY: We didn't have anything like that. But they used to have this fellow from Wahiawa. He used to come all the way down to show movies at the Hanta store (in Kaaawa), right in the back of that. Japanese movies, always. And what you call that man who... It was silent so he had to talk like one of the guys in the movies, you know. Speak for them [actors] while they're saying something. He comes out with the words and changes voice when there is a woman talking. What do you call those kind of people?

MK: Oh, gee, I can't think of the word either. [The word is benshi.]

EY: Yeah, I used to know, but I forgot already. Anyway, when it was time to show the movie, he'd come around and he'd have this drum, in the big van like thing, and he'd go around the neighborhood, playing that drum and telling everybody by the boom, boom (sound), everybody would know. And oh, we'd wish we could afford to go! (Laughs) Then, sometimes when the camp boss come down, well he would bring us down on his car. That was a treat, but we couldn't come all the time. Couldn't afford it. That's the only movies that I remember.

MK: What kind of movies do you remember that man showing?

EY: Samurai, Samurai movies.

(Laughter)

And even the other nationalities, you know, Hawaiians and other people. Oh, the kids used to love that! Next day in school, that's all they'd talk about, the Samurai movies. (Laughs) That was a treat!

MK: And you mentioned that there were stores on the other side of the valley, yeah? What store did you folks go to, if you didn't want to go outside of the valley?

EY: We used to go to this Kam store, Kam Mun store I think they used to call it. And then, anyway, Kam store and Iguchi store. Mr. and Mrs. Iguchi used to run the
MK: Was that the usual thing, where like peddlers going through to stay overnight in some place?

EY: Um hum, um hum. But Mr. Kaya, well, he was just around the neighborhood so, you know he didn't have to spend the night anywhere, because he lived right in Punalu'u. And there was Hanta's store in Kaaawa, where we used to buy our bread. We'd carry it home after school.

MK: Was that fresh bread that was baked by the people at the store?

EY: No. I think Love's Bakery, no was it Love's Bakery? There was another bakery, I forgot now. I don't think it was Love's, I think there was another bakery before them that used to bring out the bread from town.

MK: Could you kind of describe to me, what the valley looked like? Most of us, we just think, it's green you know over there. What did it look like to you?

EY: It was green, with all the sugarcane. Then when they harvested the cane, well, it was just lot of barren soil. But on the mountainside was all a lot of trees, lot of guava trees, some mangoes and mountain apple. There was a stream, right, just about in the middle of the valley coming down to the ocean. Right now when you look at it, it's sad because it's so overgrown and you can't even see the water in some places. And we used to have bridges, so that we could go from one side of the valley to the other. Right near the furo, we used to have a bridge. The bridge was just a log, timber about maybe ten-by-ten or twelve-by-twelve. Something like that. And then when there's a heavy rain and the stream gets flooded, and the (water would) wash that bridge away, we would have to wait until the water would come down [i.e., subside] and then somebody would put it [i.e., the bridge] back up. Then the camp...
boss got tired of going way down the stream looking for it [i.e., the bridge], so he used to tie it with pieces of wire to a tree on the side, and leave one end loose, so that when the water came down, it wouldn't wash it down.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Ok, so you were talking about what the camp boss would do when the stream would flood?

EY: We also had another bridge further down, it was closer to the lower part of the valley, the right-hand side of the valley. That was kind of a short cut because otherwise the people from the camps would have to go way up and then come down, and around the valley. So we had one [i.e., a bridge] in the back of our field. There was another bridge there, so that it wasn't too far going back and forth.

MK: Was there a lot of crossing over from one side of the valley to the other side?

EY: Yes, not too much, but when they harvest another field across the stream, things like that, then they would have to have that bridge so (they could get to the other side) faster. But when you go visit one another, when we had the farm there, we used to go there every day and cross over the bridge. Sometimes when that bridge got washed away, well we had to go around the long way. It was a narrow path alongside of the stream and right next to the sugarcane field. It was so narrow that oh, you would have to go through the cane field to get there. (Laughs) It was a narrow path. I remember going through that by myself and I used to be so scared. And my mother used to worry all the time, because my oldest brother, he used to go to Punaluu, to Japanese school, and he used to have to cross that bridge. She said she always worried about him because he might fall, because it was much deeper down there, not like where, we were, by our camp. It wasn't too deep, but over there was. The water was deep and she said she used to worry all the time, "Oh, what if he should fall." In fact he did fall one day, came home all wet.

(Laughter)
Good thing he came out of it all right. I remember crossing that other bridge near our camp. I had the baby on my back and I slipped and I fell in the water and it was above my head, (laughs) but good thing it wasn't too wide, so I was able to walk out to the shallow area. But, oh, I'll never forget that! (Laughs)

MK: Gee, the stream was kind of big then?
EY: Certain areas, yes, certain areas was deep.

MK: What happened when the stream would flood? Were houses affected by the flooding?
EY: No, no, the banks were high, so never did overflow, not that I remember. And then it was clear, too, you know, no overgrown trees, or weeds or like now so the water could go right straight down to the ocean.

MK: You know since you folks were living up in the valley, what did you folks have in terms of utilities? Any kind of utility?
EY: No electricity, no water. We had telephone. We had one at our house too, but after awhile my folks couldn't afford it anymore, so we didn't have a telephone. Only the camp boss had a telephone and everybody would use that, but we didn't use it too often, just when we really needed to. I remember when I left home to go work and lived in Haleiwa, I would have to call the camp boss. The lady [i.e., camp boss' wife] there, they were very nice people. The lady would come and look for my mom to come and answer the phone, just to let her know when I was coming (home) and things like that. So that's the only convenience that we had. No running water.

MK: How about ice?
EY: Oh, Mr. Kaya [the peddler from Punaluu] used to have ice, but we never had ice around the house, never.

MK: So mostly in terms of preserving your foods, it was more salted or stored away?
EY: And we had a well, and it was quite deep and it was real cool down there. So my mother used to put things in a bucket or something, and put it down in the well to preserve it. But not meats and things, you know.

MK: How about like, fish? You know the ocean is kind of near and you had the stream.
EY: Yeah, down there in the bay, they used to catch a lot of akule. And you know by the Crouching Lion, right near the ocean side? Not way at the top, but lower part there. A Hawaiian man from inside the valley, would go up there to look for the fish from way up there, and when he saw the school of fish coming in, he'd call out. He'd call out and we could hear it way inside the valley. From there, we could hear him. As soon as we hear his voice, we all come out from the valley. Everybody from inside the valley would come out. Then all the fishermen would come out with their boats and their nets and they would go and surround the fish. They used to catch a lot and everybody would help pull the net in. And everybody, depending on the catch now, everybody would get a share of that catch. If the catch was small, then every family would get some fish. So they really were so nice sharing all that, yeah. Then whatever was the extra they took some to the market in town. They got some ice and put it on the truck and took it to town.

MK: How was that organized though, that kind of fishing?

EY: Well, mostly the Hawaiians did the work. They got their nets. There was a man down there, I think he used to work for the Foster Estate. He took care of the valley and the people around there too. He was a, I think he was a haole man. He had the truck and he would help them take the fish to the market and all the Hawaiians, I think they worked together. I don't know how they shared the money that they got from selling it, but you know how Hawaiians are, so generous, always willing to share.

MK: How much contact was there between the Japanese in the valley and in the Hawaiians in the valley?

EY: Well, they were all really nice, really, the Hawaiians were really nice. When you know, we used to walk to school together with the other kids, the Hawaiian kids, and come home and sometimes go down there to play, and lunch time they'd invite us in the house and say, "Come eat, come eat," you know. So the relationship was really nice, yeah. We played together, and when they come up to our house it was the same thing. Same thing with the Filipinos, real nice. If anybody gave trouble in the camp, next day he'd be gone. The camp boss would just kick him out. He was very strict about that. They had better behave or else.

MK: You mentioned that the Fosters had an estate up there in the valley? What did that look like, the Foster Estate up in the valley?
EY: I don't remember too well, but I know there was a house there some place, near the ocean. All I remember is the coconut trees. (Laughs) A lot of coconut trees. In fact, there's still, some of the coconut trees are still there.

MK: And that estate was on the right side of the valley?

EY: Um hum, um hum, right side of the valley ah ha.

MK: Did you ever have any contact with the Fosters?

EY: No, I never did see them, uh huh, cause they were on the opposite side.

MK: And you know, I heard that, that valley is really wet.

EY: It is.

MK: How did you feel about over there being so wet?

EY: Well, it didn't bother me. As a child I was getting wet all the time. We used to carry umbrellas every day to school during the winter months.

(Laughter)

Every day, so we used to call it, "The umbrella brigade."

(Laughter)

Because I think there were at least five or six of us from my family alone, walking to school. So we all carried the umbrella. And sometimes after the heavy rain, they have these places, where the water would come down from the valley and flood the road you know, and pretty soon, all the mud would be washed away. Not all areas, but (in) certain areas, the mud would all washed away and oh, it would be nice and clean. We used to run to that place to wash our feet.

(Laughter)

Get clean.

(Laughter)

Otherwise our feet would be so muddy, eh. The road going up in the valley, it had two, just like where the tire marks were, you know, it was clear, then in the middle was overgrown with grass. So if it's wet, if
you walk in the mud, you get muddy. If you walk in the
ground you get dirty, anyway because a lot of oil (on
the grass) from the cars and things. So when the rains
came and we used to see the nice clear water going, oh,
we used to like that! (Laughs)

MK: How about, since you folks were kind of in an isolated
area, what happened, say when somebody got sick?

EY: Well, the only time I remember was when my brother, the
one right above me, he was kind of a sickly child when
he was young. He was the only one that went to the
hospital. The rest of us, well every time we got sick,
my father and mother took care of us.

And they used to have a man that used to come around
and peddle medicines, Japanese medicines. He would
leave us a bag full of all different kinds, he would
mark it down, (on the outside of the bag). Then the
next time he come, he check to see if any of the
medicines were used and he would charge us only what we
used. That's what he used to do. I remember when we
were sick, my father really cared for [us], worried
about us. He'd be out in the field, you know, and come
home all muddy and dirty. He just washed his hands
[and come in] with his dirty tabis and all. He would
tiptoe into our bedroom and feel our head to see if we
were all right. Yeah, he really cared for us. He
worried about us.

MK: In those days, like you were the fourth child, yeah?
When it came to the other children, you know when they
were coming into the world, how were they brought into
the world? Midwife?

EY: Midwife, yes, midwife, all midwife. This lady that
used to live up there, Mrs. Nozawa, she used to come
and deliver all the babies. She used to work out on
the farm, but every time somebody gave birth, she would
stay home and take care of the baby, bathe them, and
cook, yeah. She even cooked for us. She was really
nice. So everybody depended on her, every time they
gave birth. Not only on our side of the valley, but
she would take care of the people on the other side
too. She was a tiny little lady. Shorter than, way
shorter than me. (Laughs)

MK: Did you ever have to help with your mom giving birth?

EY: No, I didn't have to. But I remember, I don't know who
was born at that time, but when my mother was giving
birth, they would put this kava, you know the mosquito
thing [i.e., mosquito netting], and hang it on the wall from one (wall) to the other, so that you know we couldn't see from the outside. The lady would be inside taking care of my mother and then I would be out in the kitchen side. I would wait for the baby to cry, and when I heard the baby cry, oh, (I was) excited, yeah!

(Laughter)

MK: Then when the baby would be born and everything, would a priest come and visit later on, or something?

EY: No, no.

MK: In terms of religious services, how was that done in Kahana Valley?

EY: There was a [Buddhist] priest down (at) Kahuku, from that temple down (in) Kahuku, he used to come down to Kahana Valley. Usually in the evening and hold services at the camp, the Tanaka's home. We used to go there, although we couldn't understand anything that he said. (Laughs) But we went there mostly to get the refreshments.

(Laughter)

We would get so sleepy, you know, nodding our heads and keep waking up. Just waiting for them to start serving refreshments. (Laughs)

MK: A lot of things just came to the valley, yeah? Peddlers came to the valley, priets came. (Pause) Let's see, how about mail, though? How was the mail done?

EY: The mail—when we started going to school, they used to deliver it to Hanta's store. They had a little box out in the front, and we used to stop there on our way home from school to pick up the mail. Before that, I think they used to take it down to the store in Kahana where the railroad depot [was located]. I think that's where it was delivered, I'm not too sure but. And the man who brought the mail was one of the taxi drivers that used to come from town in the day. He used to take the mail all the way to Kahuku, Laie and Hauula, and then he would pick up our mail from Hauula and deliver it to Hanta's store. Everybody used to go to Hanta's store to pick up the mail.
MK: And how often was that?

EY: Once a day.

MK: Pretty good, yeah?

EY: Yeah, every day, because he used to come out every day, yeah.

MK: And you mentioned that before you used to write the letters to your brothers. Was that because your dad didn't write in English?

EY: Yes, yes that's right, um hum.

MK: For the other Japanese in camp, was there someone who would write the letters to Japan?

EY: I think most of them could write Japanese so, they did. My father used to write his own letters too.

MK: And then you mentioned that you went to Kaaawa School. Kaaawa Elementary School.

EY: Kaaawa, yes.

MK: Was that the nearest school that you could go to?

EY: Yes.

MK: And can you kind of describe that school when you were going there?

EY: Oh, when I was going there, there was (a) principal's cottage and teachers' cottage and one building (with) two classrooms and another building, (with) one classroom. So was three classrooms all together. And we had the outhouse and we had water tank. There was a windmill too. So the water was kind of brackish, and so no running water. Half of the school, the grounds, were usable though, but in the back, half of it, was all overgrown with weeds. Really overgrown. And we had a garden in the back where we used to grow our sweet potatoes, I remember mostly sweet potatoes.

Then after Mrs. Richmond came to our school--she was really very good teaching us a lot of things besides just reading and writing. She started us in the community project. And our project was to clear that area in the back. Not only there, but across the street where the park is now. Every week I think, maybe in the afternoon, we would go out and clean the
park. That was our community project. We also had a flagpole right in front of the main building. And every morning everybody would (line up) out there, and what we call that, pledge allegiance to the flag and sing a song and have a prayer too, the Lord's Prayer. That's how I first learned the Lord's Prayer.

In the cottage, sometimes they used to have two teachers, but one teacher was Mr. Domingo. He lived right next to the school. So there was only one person I think living in that big teachers' cottage. It was big enough so that two or three teachers could live there, but we never had that many teachers in those days. I remember Mr. Looney was our Principal. He was an old, old man, really old man. I just found out that he was a very well-educated man. I think he used to teach at Harvard, one of the old schools on the Mainland. I don't know what made him come to Kaaawa, of all places. But I guess he got tired of teaching there, so he came. When I was in the first grade, the teacher taught the first grade and the fifth grade class (in one classroom). Then we went to the second, third and fourth grade (all in one room). And the sixth, seventh, eighth grade, that's where Mr. Looney taught us. That's how we were divided in different classrooms.

MK: The last time I talked with you, you mentioned that there was also a Japanese teacher from the Mainland?

EY: I don't know whether she was from the Mainland or Hawaii, but I had a Japanese teacher. My first grade teacher was Japanese.

MK: And those days, how were the teachers?

EY: Oh, they were very good but they were strict! Yeah, some of them were really, really strict! Couldn't talk to one another (while in class). You have to pay attention, really pay attention.

MK: What would happen if you didn't pay attention?

EY: Oh you get spanked, whacked on the hand.

(Laughter)

And anytime you did something wrong, something not good, even while we were playing outside, oh you'd get it! Somebody would turn you in and you get it.

(Laughter)
The Japanese [-language] school teacher was really strict too. He started teaching when I started first grade, so we were his first (first-) grade students there. He was very strict. Boy, when he would stand up and speak, everybody had to look at him in his face. I remember one time, somebody didn't, he grabbed the eraser, you know, and he just threw it at him. (Laughs)

MK: Wow!

EY: But he was a good teacher, very good teacher. And you know trying to teach eight grades, eight different grades in one classroom, everybody had to mind, had to be quiet and do your studying. So he start off with the first, second, third, and fourth grades. Half of the class he would teach right after the English school and the rest of us would be playing outside. When he gets through with that, then we all come in, the next four grades, and then he would teach us, and the other four grades would be cut playing, waiting for us to go home. Some of them had to walk home by themselves, and my brothers they all had to wait for all of us, so we walked home together. He was really strict, but we really learned a lot from him, because while he was teaching the other grades, we would have to study, yeah, on our own.

MK: And where was that Japanese-language school?

EY: Right across from the little park. Yeah, it's not there anymore.

MK: So not too far from the elementary school.

EY: No, no, not too far.

MK: Going back to the elementary school [topic], the English school, what kind of kids attended the school?

EY: Mostly Hawaiians and Japanese, mostly. I remember there was one Portuguese and there were two Chinese families. That's about all, and the rest Japanese and Hawaiians. Oh, and no, a few Filipinos too, very few.

MK: And how far did the kids come from?

EY: Some came from Kualoa and some from Punaluu. They all walked too. We used to walk too. Sometimes the taxi drivers would, if they had room, they would pick us up. There was one taxi driver who catered to the haoles, you know. Oh, he would never pick us up.

(Laughter)
Because we'd have to sit on a customer's lap, or you know the old cars, the running board, you remember? Well, we would all have to stand on the running board and he would just pack us in. Of course when he was loaded, he couldn't stop and pick us up. And I remember hanging on to the door and standing on the running board. The older guy would just put his arms around (us little ones), just to make sure that we don't fall off the running board. (Laughs)

MK: That was really nice though, of the taxi drivers.

EY: Yeah, it was really nice. All their customers were real nice too, you know, they didn't mind. They knew what it was like I guess walking all that distance. So every time we see the taxi coming, we all wait and wish! Wish he had room to pick us up!

(Laughter)

MK: Gee, the taxis were running early in the morning then?

EY: Yes, early in the morning, um hum. This other one used to come during the middle of the day. He'd come by here about, I don't know (exactly) what time, maybe nine, ten o'clock, maybe later. And then he'd go all the way to Kahuku and come back again, one, two o'clock in the afternoon. Very few other cars. A lot of times we used to see tourists in these great big limousines coming by, all elegantly dressed people and they'd make hello with their gloved hands to us natives.

(Laughter)

MK: So, tourist used to come way out here?

EY: Yes, they used to go around the island, like that.

MK: Going back to the school, what did you like best about school?

EY: Gee, that's hard to say. Well, I enjoyed learning. I enjoyed reading. When Mrs. Richmond came, she started teaching us a lot of other things. That's what I liked, you know. I remember when she started us making quilts, Hawaiian quilts, that was interesting and I used to like that. What else did she teach us? She taught us a lot of things and it wasn't just from the book you know.

MK: You mentioned swimming.
EY: Yes, swimming was another thing she started, swimming classes. That was fun too. Of course, I was never a good swimmer. I used to cheat.

(Laughter)

MK: What do you mean you used to cheat?

EY: Instead of swimming and kicking, every once in a while, I'd get tired, I'd put my feet down and push myself.

(Laughter)

MK: Oh, nobody could tell?

EY: No. (Laughs)

MK: Gee.

EY: Terrible yeah.

(Laughter)

Because we all had to pass the test.

MK: That was out from here?

EY: Out in front of the park, right in front of the school.

MK: And then you mentioned something about bath towels?

EY: Oh yes. That was from Mrs. Swanzy. See Mrs. Swanzy, she was a very nice woman and at that time they donated the land for the school too. Every year at Christmas time, she would come with her chauffeur and all the candy and apples and oranges. Those candies used to come in a little box with the little handle. She would pass it out to us. She would come to each classroom, (and when) we saw her coming over and the teacher would say, "Everybody rise." And we (would) all rise and say, "Good morning Mrs. Swanzy." (Laughs) Then she would come in and she would sit down and we all sit down and the chauffeur would bring the boxes of fruits and candies. But she'd go down right by the box and she would hand them out individually to all of us every year. Then when she found out about our swimming class, she asked the teacher what would be a good gift for the kids. She wanted to buy some kind of gift other than candy and fruits. So she must have been told that towels would be good, because we never had
those kind of big bath towels, you know. That was really something to us. We really cherished that. I remember, I never used it for anything else except for the swimming class.

(Laughter)

That was really nice.

MK: Did you folks have things like May Day celebration?

EY: Yes, we had that, uh huh. We'd all make our own leis and we would have May dance. We didn't have it that early part, but I think when Mrs. Richmond came, that's when we started a lot of these things. She was a terrific teacher.

MK: How long did this Mrs. Richmond stay?

EY: Let's see, I think I was in the seventh grade, seventh grade I think, seventh, eighth, and then the ninth. After I left school, I don't know how long she stayed. I think most of my brothers had her, so she must have stayed close to ten years, I think.

MK: So she was a pretty good teacher?

EY: Very good teacher, very good teacher.

MK: And was she involved in other community things too around here?

EY: We didn't have any other community activities. Really everything was related to the school. Like in Japanese school, same thing you know. Everything had to do with the school.

MK: I was wondering, what did you like least about school. The worst, worst thing!

EY: Gee, I don't know, I used to like everything about school, I think. I don't think there was anything that I didn't like. Oh, maybe digging weeds.

(Laughter)

Every time, you know you did something wrong or you didn't do good in your grades, you get penalized. You have to go pick so many weeds. (Laughs)

MK: Oh we still do that!
EY: Yeah?
MK: Um hum, um hum.

EY: I didn't dig too many times, but I think maybe at least once. The boys, some of them were cheating, you know. They would fill up a bag, you know, and they would take it and show it to a teacher and when they go out, they give it to the next guy.

(Laughter)

MK: Kind of smart, yeah.
EY: Yeah. (Laughs)

MK: You know, when you were going to school, were you aiming for something like--did you hope to do a certain type of work when you finished school?

EY: Gee, I think I wanted to be a (teacher), I think.
MK: Oh!
EY: I think that's all that I really thought about. I wanted to go to school and keep on, and go to high school, but I just couldn't. My father couldn't afford it. My teacher (tried) to get a maid's job, a live-in maid's job, so I could go to school in town. But it was in 1932 when I finished, so that was the depression days so she couldn't get a job for me, so I couldn't continue in school. In fact my oldest brother, he went to Mid-Pacific [Institute] for one year, but that's all my father could afford. I'm sure my father felt real bad about it. I think he wanted us to have a good education, and I think that hurt him more than anything, not being able to send us to school. But the sixth brother, sixth one in the family. He hurt his back and he had to have surgery and he couldn't do any hard work, so my father had to send him to school. So he commuted from Kaaawa to town, to McKinley. And there were other kids, they all had their turn of going to school, but all us older ones, we had to go to work, (to help) support the family.

MK: So the older ones kind of helped the younger ones?
EY: Yes.
MK: To go to school?
EY: Yes, um hum.
MK: Did the younger ones also work in town as the yard-boys or something to help too?

EY: You mean while they were in school? No, they lived at home and they helped my father on the farm and they commuted. The one that hurt his back, he commuted. Oh, the rest of them, yeah, they did go town to live, yeah. They lived in town and one brother worked as a busboy I think in one of the hotels. Yeah, that's right, that's right, he did. And then the last two, they went to Kahuku [High School]. The last three, they went to Kahuku, that's right.

MK: By then that school was built then?

EY: Yes, yes, they went to Kahuku [High School]. They had this truck, plantation truck, that used to come and pick them up and they would have to stand in the back of this truck.

MK: Gee, so by that time it got little bit easier yeah, it was possible to send children to school.

EY: Right, uh huh.

MK: How about in terms of the other neighborhood kids you know. Were they all attending school too, up to high school?

EY: Yes, by that time. My brother used to commute, the sixth in the family. He used to go with Hanta, Mr. Hanta's son. He used to drive. They had the store and they had the farm too, so they were more well-to-do than the rest of us. He used to ride with them.

MK: How about in your time, you know all your other classmates?

EY: Well, the Furuya family, they had relatives in town, so the kids went to town, they lived with the relatives and they went to high school. And the Tanaka family too. They had relatives in town, so they stayed in town and went to school.

MK: So having relatives or having transportation made it possible for them yeah?

EY: Yeah. Besides my father couldn't afford the tuition too.

MK: There was a tuition?
EY: They used to charge in school, to go to school. I'm pretty sure they did, and I know we had to buy our own books. I'm not too sure about the tuition, but I know we had to buy our books. (But, maybe I'm thinking of the Japanese Language-School tuition.)

MK: Those days had all those other expenses, yeah, had to worry about?

EY: Yeah.

MK: While you were still going to Kaaawa school, what was over here like? What was Kaaawa like?

EY: There weren't very many houses. There was one house right on this road, right where the Crouching Lion (Restaurant) is, and there (were three more) houses between here and there. Over here was all empty lots, empty, empty, all empty, until the store, 7-Eleven, and there was one house there and then further over, there was farmhouse. Not very many houses, yeah, very few houses.

MK: So different from now.

EY: Very different, oh yes, yes. And now most of the area down here was farm. We had a farm where the store is. And further over, was another farm. And then the [Kualoa] ranch had the pasture in the back.

MK: And Kualoa Ranch owns all the land around here?

EY: All from that bridge there and over this side, they don't own. On the other side they own all that land, most of the land. There were a few people who own lots in between.

MK: And the people that were living here in this Kaaawa area? What were they doing for a living?

EY: Mostly farming, mostly farming. I don't know what the Hawaiians did, but maybe they probably worked for City and County, maintaining the roads and the park and things. When I first started (school), even the park was just full of weeds, just tall weeds. (laughs)

MK: Big difference now. (laughs)

EY: Yeah, and the road was way on the ocean side, made of coral. Then when I started going school, I don't know how old I was--then they put in this road, and they put concrete on it. I remember taking shortcuts, you know,
instead of going on the (old road.) Before the (new) road was open, right after they poured the concrete, they put some sand on it, I guess so it (would) stay moist and it wouldn't crack. And then they'd have pieces of boards with all these nails on it so that the cars wouldn't go on that new road. Just to keep the cars off the road, here and there they used to have boards across the road. I remember walking, one day, I accidently stepped on that. (laughs)

MK: Oh that must have hurt! (laughs)

EY: Yes, it was all coral, the old roads.

MK: It's really changed from those days.

EY: Yeah.

MK: Now there's the store, the post office, the fire station. New houses, and even a small townhouse complex.

EY: Yeah, townhouses, uh huh.

MK: Changed, yeah?

EY: Even the beach areas used to be much wider. It's all eroded, all eroded.

MK: Oh, so that wasn't from the hurricane or anything?

EY: No.

MK: I was looking out at the beach and I thought it looked kind of narrow.

EY: No.

MK: That's from before?

EY: Before yeah. Really got eroded. I remember walking home from school. We'd go and we'd walk in the water coming home sometimes.

(Laughter)

Catch tako, we see the tako you know. (Laughs)

MK: Yeah? Was it that easy to catch tako?

EY: Oh yeah! We used to see a lot of them in the shallows really, yeah.
MK: How about now days though. Can you see the tako that easily around here?

EY: There's not too many. You can see them, but not too many. It's hard to find, yeah hard to find. Then after Japanese school, we used to walk home. On Saturday, that's when we had time to walk on the beach, because we'd be [in school] only half a day, Japanese school. But during the weekdays, it would be too late and we'd have to walk quite a distance, and by the time we go out into the old road and into the valley, it would be dark. I remember I used to be so scared walking home, cause the boys would start talking about obake stories you know.

(Laughter)

Oh! I didn't want to be the last one in the line, so I'd run and try and stay in between, you know. And pretty soon, one person would start running and everybody would run. (Laughs)

MK: You said that you completed eight grades in seven years yeah? So for seven years you used to do that, walk out from the valley?

EY: But after awhile, this Japanese [-language] school teacher, he bought a car. So after school, he used to take us home. Drop us off, all the ones that lived in Kahana and in Punaluu. He would drop us off on the highway, and we used to have to walk up in the valley.

MK: You were mentioning yesterday, that after you finished your seven years of school, you stayed one more year and you helped the teacher [at Kaaawa School].

EY: Um hum.

MK: What were you doing, helping the teacher?

EY: Teaching some of the children to read, one at a time. Those that were having difficulty, I used to help them. Then she used to give me work to do too. I mean school work and I used to do that too.

MK: So she gave you some school work?

EY: Yeah. Before I started going to ninth grade, she wrote to the D.P.I., that used to be the Department of Public Instruction. I think, DPI, we used to call it. She wrote to the superiors and asked them for permission for me to do that. So that's how I was able to go.
MK: What were your feelings about doing that kind of help at the school?

EY: I didn't really like it. I used to get mad at the kids. (Laughs) Some of them [i.e., students] were kind of big you know. Here I was. "No, (laughs) not like that." Well, I guess I was impatient those days.

(Laughter)

MK: And then after that year, you said that you helped the Japanese language teacher at the home, and you learned to sew in return. How was that arranged? How did that come about?

EY: Well she used to teach sewing too. In the afternoon they would teach at Japanese school. So in the morning she would teach [sewing]. That's how I learned how to sew. Then in the afternoons, after she went to teach [Japanese language], I would take care of their two children. One was a little baby yet. They gave me spending money once in a while. They couldn't afford too much either, because of the family. She had several other children too.

MK: Were there more than just you staying over there?

EY: No, I was the only one, yeah outside of the family.

MK: And what kind of things did you learn how to sew?

EY: Oh, all kinds, dresses, pants, shirts....

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape No. 10-7-2-83

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Edith Kiyoko (Anzai) Yonenaka (EY)

June 14, 1983

Kaaawa, Oahu

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Edith Yonenaka, at her home in Kaaawa, Hawaii, on June 14, 1983.

Ok, so today, we're going to continue with that part of your life, when you were helping the Japanese [-language] school teacher and learning to sew. And I was wondering, what did you actually do during that time with the Japanese [-language] school teacher's family?

EY: Well, I mostly helped with the housekeeping and the cooking, laundry and all those things! And then, when the teacher left to go to Japanese [-language] school to teach, well, I took care of the little ones. I think there were two at that time. One was a little baby, so I took care of the baby. That's what I did mostly.

MK: You also mentioned that you learned to sew.

EY: Yes, in the morning, when she was home, she would teach me how to sew. And she also had other students. Not too many, but they would come in in the morning and we would all learn to sew.

MK: Those days, what was the sewing like?

EY: What do you mean?

MK: Like what type of machine and whether or not you learned to make patterns?

EY: Oh yes, we had to make our own patterns. It was the old-fashioned sewing machine, with the foot pedal that you have to work with.
MK: And those days, what type of clothing did you learn to sew?

EY: All kinds. Dresses, pants, shirts. I even learned to embroider too. Nearly everything that people wear (laughs).

MK: And was it a live-in type of arrangement for you?

EY: Yes.

MK: And how was that arranged? How did this all come about?

EY: Well, we were living in Kahana Valley, and the (Japanese-language school) teachers used to bring some of the children during the summer when [it was] mountain apple season. And we used to take them up into the valleys, you know, where the children could pick the mountain apples and that's how we got to know them. This couple needed somebody to take care of their children, so they asked my folks and my folks agreed, so that's how I got that work.

MK: Where were you living at that time?

EY: In their home, in the Haleiwa town. Gee, it's hard to describe, because everything's changed right now. It's not near the ocean, it's further in, just before you get to Haleiwa Theatre, around there, uh huh.

MK: What were their names?

EY: Mr. and Mrs. Ito. And they had some older children, too, older than me that used to go to high school. I think they used to go Leilehua High School.

MK: You know, at that time, what did you think about living with this Japanese [-language] school teacher's family, and learning how to sew?

EY: Well, I think it was a good experience, especially after living in Kahana [Valley]. You know, you don't get exposed to much, way up inside there. And so, it was nice, meeting a lot of people, that's one of the things that I liked too. And they were really nice to me too so, I really enjoyed it. It was so much better than living in Kahana, although there were times when I got a little homesick. Not too bad but, so when it was time for me to come home, just before New Year's, I would just look forward to (going home) in the morning (laughs) and get up early and think about it.
(Laughs) And every once in a while, I'd call home, long distance call. You know even those days, you had to pay for it, those calls. (Like calls to Honolulu, Waipahu, and other places beyond Kahuku and Kaneohe.) And we didn't have a phone, but our [family's] neighbor had a phone, so they were very nice too. The [neighbor] lady would usually answer the phone and she would come, run over. It was quite a distance. Uh, gee, maybe from here to the main highway, I think. She would run down and call my mom and (laughs) and my mom would run (to the phone). I mean the people were so neighborly, just like a family. They were so nice. And we had those old telephones, where you put the coins in every time you make a long distance call. They don't charge it on the bill, like they do now.

MK: When you moved out to the Haleiwa area, what struck you as being the most different thing from Kahana?

EY: I guess the stores, the movie theatre, (laughs). Because we didn't have any stores. Oh, we did have one. There (was) a store, but you know, it was just a few necessities and the lady would open up just when we needed something. We would just go over and ask her and she would open up the store and get it for us. It wasn't an all day business. Those things were different.

MK: After you worked there for about a year, I know that you worked for the Haga family store in Waialua. How did that arrangement come up?

EY: Almost the same way. The father, Mr. Haga there, he used to come around and peddle all kinds of things, groceries and dried goods. He used to come and spend the night, because it would be all the way from Waialua. He would stop along the way, and when he gets to Kahana, he would spend the night with us. And then, the next day he would maybe go further down and go back all the way to Waialua. So we got to know him real well. And they needed help, because the daughter-in-law was going to have another baby. She needed help taking care of the baby and help in the store, too. So that's how he asked my father and so he sent me over there.

MK: While you worked at the Haga store, what type of work did you do?

EY: Oh, I used to wait on customers, and I used to do the laundry, help with the cooking, the dishes, taking care of the children, cleaning house, everything,
everything. (Laughs) Not all the time, because the lady used to do a lot of the cooking and minding the store. But I would help her do all those other things.

MK: In that store, how were the purchases made?

EY: All charge accounts, mostly charge accounts. Because there was a plantation camp right around it so, people would come in and charge. On pay day, they'd come in and pay. So we had to keep (a) record of all their charges too.

MK: And when you were working at that store, what was it like working with the customers?

EY: I used to enjoy that. In fact there were a lot of Filipino customers, so I learned how to speak a little Filipino, too, Ilocano [dialect]. So that got me interested in language. I love studying language, (but) I never had time for it, I never did get around to it. But, I used to be able to speak pretty good Ilocano. Of course, I forgot a lot of it now. And meeting people, I think I always enjoyed that more than anything.

MK: And how did you learn Ilocano?

EY: Talking--just talking to the customers. And they'd speak back--talk back in their language. And sometimes when I (didn't) understand it, they'd explain it to me, and that's how I learned.

MK: Those days, what kind of things did most of the customers buy at the store?

EY: Bread, crackers, and canned foods. Of course, they always had candy and slippers and tabis. We used to sell dry goods, some undershirts and underwear too. And some (work clothes) too.

MK: You know, at that store, were there people who went out into the camps to get orders from the workers?

EY: By the time I got there we didn't have that. I think there was another store in Haleiwa that used to send a man out to do that but at Haga Store, no, we didn't do that.

MK: In terms of your pay at that store, what was it like?
EY: I forget now whether it was ten or twenty dollars a month. Something like that. Ten or twenty dollars, I forget.

MK: What were you doing with that money?

EY: I saved every bit of it and then when I came home, I gave some of it to my folks, to help the family, you know. Then New Year's, when I come home to spend the holidays with the family, I'd buy fireworks, especially fireworks for the boys, because I had a lot of brothers. And I'd call them ahead of time that I would be home on a certain day. I got all the fireworks, of course, wholesale from Haga's. And the next day when I came home I had to catch the taxi from Waialua all the way to town and from there get onto another taxi out to Kahana. All the boys--my brothers would be down on the main highway waiting for me.

(Laughter)

And they used to be so happy with all the fireworks I brought home for them.

MK: Those days, what kind of fireworks were really popular?

EY: Um, regular fireworks. You know the little ones and the skyrockets, you know the rockets?

MK: Uh huh [Yes].

EY: We used to have a lot of that. Oh some of them were long like this (EY indicates a length of approximately eighteen inches). So, I think that was one of the most popular ones, the fireworks, skyrockets.

MK: Did many of the other families also do fireworks for New Year's?

EY: Oh yes, oh yes, they all did that.

MK: And gee, you've been mentioning that you would come home at New Year's. What other times could you, visit home?

EY: It was usually during New Year's. I don't remember coming home any other time, though. Maybe I did, but not more than twice a year.

MK: You were there for three years. As you look back, what did you think about that experience?
EY: Gee, it's hard to say, hard to say. Well I'm glad that I was able to get out of Kahana, even for that short time, to see what the outside world is like. And that's another reason why I sent my kids to Mid-Pac [Mid-Pacific Institute]. I didn't want them to stay in the small community like this. I want them to go out and see what the world is like and experience a lot of other things that they would never experience in the little community. So that's the biggest reason why I sent them to Mid-Pac [Mid-Pacific Institute], to get out of the country. And meet new people, you know. I think too, I met a lot of interesting people.

MK: I know that, in 1935, your family moved out of Kahana Valley. Why is that?

EY: I think, they found a place down here [in Kaaawa] where the man was going to give up his farm. You see when my father was farming, (he had) to walk from his house to the farm, quite a distance, couple of miles or so, maybe less than two miles. But over here [in Kaaawa], the house was right in the center of the farm, so I think that's the reason why he moved, I'm not sure. Besides it would be so much handier than staying way up in the valley, because every time we wanted to go anywhere, we'd have to walk down to the main highway to catch the taxi. And to go to the store, you know we have to go quite a distance. It was more handy for all of us because there was a store, the Ranta Store. They [Ranta Store] didn't have too many things but you can go and buy your bread every day if you wanted to. It's not too far. So I think that's the biggest reason. And not only that, it was such a wet place. It rained all the time--in the valley. And my mother sure worked hard trying to get the laundry done, you know. A lot of days she would have it out in the yard--strung up all on the clothes lines. Then the rain start coming, so she'd have to run outside and take them in. She used to hang it in the kitchen, you know where we had the fire--wooden fire going. She would string them up right there. Oh, she really worked hard. So my mother was really happy to get out of Kahana.

(Laughter)

MK: Then when you returned to your family in Kaaawa, what did you do?

EY: That's when I started sewing, sewing for the neighbors, few neighbors that we had. I didn't do too
much. And then I did a lot of sewing for my brothers too, and my mother.

MK: At that time, what did other girls your age, you know do?

EY: A lot of them moved to town. Some of them stayed out here but they, a lot of them moved to town [Honolulu] to get other kind of work. So there weren't too many girls my age living out here. They would come home every now and then and we would get to see them, but not too many.

MK: How about your brothers at that time?

EY: Well, while we were still in Kahana, I think when two (or)---three of my older brothers had already gone to town [Honolulu] to work. They used to work for the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. My older brother went first and he got my second brother to come in with him. And then the next one. The three of them were in town. And the rest of them, they were all younger than me. They were still home when we moved to Kaaawa.

I'll never forget, you know, (when) my father wanted to put the farm in the whole area all around the house. But my brothers, the one right below me, especially, I think he was the instigator. He wanted a little lawn where he could play. Play football and things like that. So he got all the other younger brothers to go on a strike.

(Laughter)

Protesting. (Laughs) I was home when that happened and I saw my brother all coming home, walking in from the farm. And then my father grumbling and walking in.

(Laughter)

He had to give in. So that's how we got the front lawn in front of the house. (laughs) Every time I think about it, I laugh. (Laughs)

MK: He gave in!

EY: He gave in. My father wasn't a mean man. He was a loving man and so he felt well, if that's what they want (laughs).

MK: Was it unusual for farming families to have that kind of lawn?
EY: Yes, yes. Very few places had those lawns. They all had farm, right around the house.

MK: Up to the doorstep then?

EY: Just about! Not—well maybe they had a few trees and other plants close to the house, but in the back, there were all farms, right up to the house. Most of the houses were like that.

MK: I guess in those days, land, well, even now, land's so precious.

EY: Yes, um hum. But my brothers, as soon as they come home from school, they get some refreshments, you know. My mother would have something in the refrigerator and they take a snack, change their clothes, and they'd be right out on the farm helping my father. Without being told, everyday they did that.

MK: So, did they have very long days then?

EY: Not too long. No, they would go to Japanese [-language] school after the English school. And then come home and work a little while. It wasn't too long. Because by the time they got home from Japanese [-language] school, it would be about five o'clock. Oh, maybe an hour or so, maybe two at the most, when the days are longer, maybe they worked a little more. But it wasn't too bad. A lot of times they did help with the harvesting, I think. I was never out there. I always had my sewing and cooking (laughs). My mother would be out there, you know, but I never went out in the garden. My father never expected me to. And besides, I did my sewing and laundry and things like that, so that was my job.

MK: And so, let's see, you stayed at home and you sewed, you helped with the family's work. And in August 1941, you started the Kaaawa Vegetable Stand. Can you tell me how that started?

EY: That's when the Kualoa Ranch Company, that owns all the land, they decided to sub-divide it and lease it for homes. So, they were going to sub-divide our farm too, and well, if we gave up the farm, you know, where would my father get the income. So that's when I decided to put up the store. And Mr. Bennett, he was with the [Kualoa] Ranch Company and he was very nice. He helped us out. He said "You can farm as long as you want to." Until they found somebody to lease the
property. So we kept on farming, and then that's when I had this idea about putting up the vegetable stand. He [Mr. Bennett] was very nice, and he said "Sure." So that's how we got started. Not only that, but at that time, there was no running water in the park. A lot of people used to come over to our house and ask for water. So I thought "Oh, gee, if we had soda, that would be good." (Laughs) So that's what got me started, too.

MK: Was your vegetable stand the first place in Kaaawa that had offered soda?

EY: No, we had another store down the road, Hanta Store. They had soda, but I was the first one that brought ice cream to the community. (Laughs)

MK: So, you opened up your vegetable stand and how about the land that it stood on or was that part of your family's land?

EY: It was part of the lease that we had from the [Kualoa] Ranch Company. It was sub-divided but we asked for that certain lot, where we can put up the store. The house would be on the other lot, so we had two lots there.

MK: When you first began the vegetable stand, who did the building of the stand and the supplying of the goods?

EY: Mr. Bennett, he was nice. He was with the Waimanalo Plantation, he was manager there. He (sent) the work, the carpenters (from the plantation) to build up the store. So he really did a lot to help us get started on that.

And then my father did a lot of work too. And then when we got out the supplies, early in the morning, he'd get up and stock up the shelves, clean up around the place, pick up all the trash and the empty soda bottles and things like that. Then we had the trucking service, the Fujishige trucking service. They used to go into town every day to pick up the groceries and all kinds of things and deliver along the way. That's how we used to get our supplies. And then, of course—Dairymen's, it's not Dairymen's anymore, but Dairymen's, they used to (deliver). I don't know how often they used to come, but [they'd come] with the milk and ice cream. The soda companies, several soda companies used to come out and deliver the soda.
MK: How were you involved in the store?

EY: I was the owner. (Laughs) Because all my brothers were gone, but right after the war [i.e., World War II] broke out, you know, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel was taken over by the military for R & R [Rest and Recreation], they called it, I think. Maybe it was for the officers, I don't know, but anyway, the military took over. So my brothers didn't have a job. That's when my two brothers, the oldest one and the third one came home. My older brother and my third brother too, they were living in town and their wives didn't move out here at first. But they came out anyway and they stayed during the week, and weekends they used to go home. And that's when the military built the training camp right around the area. I needed help, so they came home and helped me in the business. And so we became partners in the business.

MK: So the three of you then.

EY: Three of us. And then one pulled out, the third brother. He took over the farm too in the back, and helped in the store. When we were busy, he would come in and help. But eventually, he dropped out, he moved back to town. But my other brother stayed and eventually my sister-in-law moved out here. And then they built a house right next to the store. After the war, I think it was, they built the house.

MK: During the war, you mentioned that the camp was built around here. Where was that military camp?

EY: Right in the back of—in fact, right all around the 7-Eleven [Food Store], that's where our store was. All in the back, on a hill, that's where the camp was. And they had training area, just beyond the store. Then they took over the park too, that was the administration office and the medical office. They took over the whole park and (and all the) houses on the ocean side where the officers used to live. (This area where we are now was the motor pool.) They got Kahana Valley, they used that area for actual jungle training. The GIs (in training) used to sleep up there, (on the hill) in the camp above the store. From there in the morning they would go out and come home at nights (and) sleep there. And every week, they'd rotate. One outfit would come in one week and then train for one week and then the following week another group would come in. So every week they had new people coming in.
MK: All of these soldiers that came, they were all from the Mainland type?

EY: Oh, mostly, yeah mostly Mainland. We had one local outfit, the [U.S. Army Corps of] Engineers, I forget what outfit it was in Kahana. You know where the park is, in Kahana, where all the coconut trees are? They used to have a camp there. I think they used to maintain the jungle training area up in the valley. I don't know exactly what they used to do, but it was an engineer's group. They were all local, all local but, the rest of them were all mostly from the Mainland.

MK: This being a real small community and the war just starting, how did the coming in of the soldiers affect say you, your family and the store?

EY: My business really started booming. Beause when they would come in, ho! Lines would form and the whole place would be packed. They would get all their drinks, the sodas, and ice cream. Oh, I remember scooping ice cream cones in the two-and-a-half gallon (container). Once you start going with that thing, I tell you, you keep on scooping ice cream (laughs) until it was all gone! That's how it was, that's how busy we were. And after a while, we put in a pinball machine, and a jukebox. Oh, that thing was going on all day! (Laughs)

MK: Every day?

EY: Every day. There was a company that used to make sandwiches. They used to deliver it way out here. We used to buy them by the boxes, boxes! I don't know, the GIs probably got sick and tired of the food that they were getting (at their mess hall). So they would come down and buy those sandwiches. And we used to sell them by the cases. And then one time, I'll never forget, something happened and gee, the day they were going to bring in the new troops, they didn't come in. So, here we were, stuck with boxes of sandwiches. (Laughs) And we had one bad experience there at night. So ever since that, the person who was in charge of the camp, he posted guards--one in the front of the store and one in the back, further in the back. Near, our house to protect us. And, I thought that was very nice of him to do that.

MK: What happened, that bad experience?

EY: Well, we had one furo in the back of the house, separate from the house. And I went to take a bath
and came out of the door and this guy just slugged me, and I fell down and I think I must have (passed) out for a minute. But before I konked out, I screamed, so my brothers came running out. So I was protected then. But then that experience made the man in charge do something about it. He posted guards. There was the medical office.... So I went there, they took me there. It wasn't anything serious. I just got a little cut on the side of my ear. But, ever since then, we never had any problem, because we had those guards.

So that day [that EY mentioned earlier], when we had all these leftover sandwiches, we took it out to the guards and said "Eh, anybody comes around, just hand it to them. Just give it away.

(Laughter)

MK: Gee, and you know, those days, how did the community react to having all the soldiers around?

EY: Gee, I don't remember. Oh, I don't think it mattered. Well, I think it would help them a lot in a way, especially those who could sew, you know. Some of these GIs would have these shirts that were too big. So they used to do a lot of altering. I used to do that too for a while, before the big gang started coming. But just before that, we had an outpost, or lookout post up on the hill. So they used to come down and I used to help them too, because I had a little room right in the back of the store with a glass window so I could watch the store at the same time. I used to do sewing back there. That's before the training (area was) started here.

Another thing, too, they had entertainment for the GIs. And so they had this house, they extended it and that was a clubhouse like. They had big room there, and they had a band and they had music and they had dancing. So the neighborhood girls used to go and dance. I used to go too once in a while.

(Laughter)

There weren't very many girls in the neighborhood too, you know.

MK: You know, being Japanese and Japan being the enemy, were there any problems with the soldiers here?
EY: No problem whatsoever, no problem. They were very nice, very nice. I didn't have any problems with them. None of us, even my brothers, had any problems. Even my folks, never had any problems with them.

MK: So overall, let's see, the store did pretty well during the war.

EY: Yes, really helped, um hum.

MK: I was wondering if the rationing affected the store in any way?

EY: No, it didn't affect us at all because the things that we sold, you know wasn't rationed. Like cigarettes were rationed but they had a PX [Post Exchange] too up on the hill. They had a PX so they could buy their cigarettes at a very cheap price, so we couldn't sell it. So whatever we had, I used to sell it to the Punaluu Store there because they needed it. And so since we couldn't sell it anyway, I just kept on selling it to them [i.e., Punaluu Store]. So rationing didn't affect us at all.

MK: During the war, say what percentage of your customers was just local people, and what percentage was servicemen?

EY: Maybe two percent local. (Laughs) Because, it was already, always packed with the GIs. So we never got to see hardly any local people. I remember selling postage stamps. Because there was no post office at that time. And we'd buy a whole stack of them, like these sheets of them. I'd go to town to buy that, and when I used to go in, this guy would ask me "What're you gonna do now with those stamps?"

(Laughter)

So that was more like a service to them. We didn't make any money on it. You know, we would charge them the regular price. So, just to accommodate them. And we used to sell a lot of stationery too.

MK: While the servicemen were here, did you folks develop any friendships?

EY: Oh yes. Especially the ones that stayed there all the time. They did the training and the office work and the medical group. We got to know them real well.
MK: Did any of the friendships kind of continue through the years?

EY: Not for long, because after they got out of the service, we hardly heard from them. But every once in a while, when I was working at the post office, you know somebody would come in and say "You remember me?" (Laughs) Once in a while, yeah. Not too often.

MK: And I'm going to move on a little bit but, in 1946 when there was the tidal wave here, how was it over here?

EY: Well, it wasn't too bad. We were kind of protected because in the park they had all these military buildings. We had a farm. My father went out for a walk or something and he went down to the beach or the park anyway, and he saw the waves coming. So he ran home and told us, "Nigero, nigero" (Run away, run away).

(Laughter).

So, "Tidal wave, tidal wave!" So we just ran up on the hill in the back where the GIs had their training camp. And we were watching the waves come in. The waves pushed some of the buildings that were in the park, against each other. So we were protected because of those buildings. Of course, the water came right into our farm. But there was hardly any--no damage whatsoever to our home, or the store or anything. The store was built a little bit high, so the water went all around and they all ended up in the farm. And we could see from up on the hill. We stayed in that big building, up there, right where we can see everything. That was the PX building and we could see the waves coming in. We couldn't see the road, it was all covered with water. That's how it was. And some of the houses along the highway, they were damaged, they were really damaged.

MK: Were there any Kaaawa people who suffered any injuries, or suffered severe damage?

EY: Not severe damage, but these two men, they almost got drowned. They went out there in the ocean to go fishing, or to pick up the nets. You know, sometimes they lay the nets the night before. Anyway, they were out there in the boat and the waves came and oh, they said they had to fight to get in. They managed to get
in, but this guy lost his wallet. He was carrying quite a sum of money. It was scattered all over. We found some in our yard too.

(Laughter)

So we knew whose it was, and we gave it to him, gave it back to him. He appreciated that. And another funny thing. My father went out in the garden, you know, and he saw fish!

(Laughter)

He caught fish in the garden!

(Laughter)

It's the first time he ever caught fish in his life, I think.

MK: There must have been a lot of fish then?

EY: Oh, those days, there was a lot of fish. I'm sure there must of been a lot, but I don't know how many he caught out in the garden. But, I know in those days, there were a lot of fish, because they had barbed wired fence all along the highway--the beach area. So you couldn't go to the beach. The GIs built something though so that they could go in to the water, but not everybody could go in.

MK: Why was a barbed wire put up?

EY: In case the enemy would come in and try to get to the land, that's why. I think, if I'm not mistaken, it was all around the island. Did you hear about that?

MK: I know that, you know the Japanese fishermen weren't allowed to continue with their trade in the war years.

EY: So hardly anybody went fishing, I don't think. Even out here.

MK: How about the Hawaiian fishermen who lived off fishing in this area?

EY: I don't know, I really don't know. We were so busy in the store, so we never had much time to go out and talk to people, or see people.

MK: Let's see, probably the next really important event that happened in your life, was when you got married,
six years later in 1952. (EY laughs) How did you meet your husband?

EY: Well, we had a ball team, baseball team. I think three or four of my brothers were playing on that team. This was before the war I think, that's right. And my husband used to live in Punaluu Valley. He came to play on our team, too. And he was a star pitcher. (Laughs) So we would go out there and root for them you know. In fact we used to go all the way down to Kaneohe and other places on the Windward side to watch them play. That's how I first met him. Of course, I never talked to him or anything. We never talked to each other. (Laughs) I was rooting for him. I'll never forget, there were two girls, two of us who were really noisy. We'd yell at the umpire, yell at the pitcher and all that. (Laughs) My mother would say "Onna no kuse ni" (A fine thing for a girl to do)! She wanted me to be quiet. My father, he didn't care. He wasn't that kind of person. He didn't care. In fact, when I was little, I used to wear my brothers' old jeans. He never cared.

(Laughter)

So then, you know, girls never wore jeans, or pants, or boy's pants (in those days). But that's how he was. And he was there [at the baseball games], he was quiet, but he was happy and smiling, because his sons were playing too. He never scolded me, but my mother didn't like the idea of me yelling. (Laughs) I never talked (to the ace pitcher), never talked to him [EY's husband]. I didn't know him until then, anyway.

After the war, somebody told him, "Eh, let's go down to Kaaawa Vegetable Stand, get one pretty girl over there."

And he was thinking, "Oh that pug nose thing, that's not pretty."

(Laughter)

And soon after that, we started dating. (Laughs) That's how we got married.

MK: How was your ceremony and the party?

EY: Well, we got married in Kaneohe, the Parker Methodist Church, by Reverend C. P. Goto. He was minister that got lot of these churches started on the Windward side. He would travel from one place to another. In
fact, for a while I think he used to be on a horse, until he got a car. He was a terrific minister. I remember when they had the anniversary celebration at Kahalu'u, they mentioned that that (church) was built during the depression. People told him, "You can't build a church now, how you gonna get the money, you know, it's depression, nobody has money." But he went ahead. He had the faith. He knew that the Lord was going to provide it. Sure enough, he built it. That's the kind of a person he was. So he started a group in Kahuku too at the home. I think that's how they got started. That's how we got started too. He used to come over to our house. Before that, he was going to another house and holding services there. Then started coming to our house and we used to have service there until the war broke out. And he married us. We had a party right there at the church hall, a reception there.

MK: After you folks were married, where did you folks live?

EY: We rented a house in Kaaawa. My husband had a farm in Punaluu, so he used to work on the farm. He was living in Wahiawa for a while, but the family lived in Punaluu. Then he came back after the war and he started the farming.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Since your husband was farming out in Punaluu, did his produce also come to the [Kaaawa] Vegetable Stand?

EY: I don't remember, but I think he used to bring some things. But he quit after a while. We used to live in Kaaawa, but my mother was home by herself, so she asked us to come back and stay with her, so we moved back with her. And a lot of the homes, those days, (were) built from the lumber that the GIs had built for their camp. What do you call those things? They used to build a floor and the side, the part of the wall, with wood and the rest of it would be a tent on the top. And after they moved out, they left everything. So Mr. Bennett told us we can have all that lumber. So that's how we built our house. I mean we built the new house first, and then we tore down the old one. That's where we were living when I got married. My mother was there by herself.
MK: Did other families around this area, also use the leftover military wood and things.

EY: Some of them. In fact, Mr. Bennett built a couple of houses around our neighborhood for people too.

MK: Did any of those houses survive up to now?

EY: The houses that was built, yes, yes. Our old house is still there.

MK: Oh!

EY: Yes. The only thing we had to buy was windows and I think the floor was new wood. And maybe the doors too, but the rest, the walls and frame, all from that used lumber.

MK: Oh, gee. And you had your first child in 1953, yeah? At that time, where did you have your child delivered?

EY: Uh, at uh (laughs) my memory is getting so bad! (Laughs) Oh, I went to Queens.

MK: Oh, into town.

EY: Yeah. (Laughs)

MK: No Castle Hospital at that time?

EY: No, no, no Castle, no.

MK: Oh! Then, let's see, also at about that time, you were saying, say, December 1952, you became postmistress for the Kaaawa area. You know, before you became postmistress, how was the mail handled in Kaaawa?

EY: We used to get our mail from Hauula Post Office. Yes, Hauula Post Office. And they had this taxi driver that would pick it up and take it down to Hanta Store and deliver it there. Then we would all go down there to pick it up. Then when I opened the store, he was nice enough to drop (ours) off at my store. Then (later) they had another driver that used to deliver it, but he delivered along the highway only and then every time there were packages or registered mail, or something like that, we had to go all the way down there to pick it up. So, that's when people got tired of going all the way down (to Hauula) to pick up their packages and things.
So Mr. Humphries, he approached me one day "Eh, how about putting in a post office in the store?"

I said "Well, okay, that's all right."

So he got a petition and that's how we were able to get the post office. Nobody wanted the job. They were paying something like twenty-three dollars a month or something like that. (Laughs) It was a fourth-class post office and nobody wanted the job. And since I was there anyway, I said "Okay, I'll take the job." That's how I got the job.

So when you became postmistress, where was the post office located?

In our store. I think by that time, we changed the name to Kaaawa Store. It was in one corner of the building. It was just like the old-fashioned post office. You know, they'd have a small little window in the front, with the little counter. We put in a wooden wall to partition that area. We had chicken wire around the top.

(Laughter)

It was a little one, only about, oh shucks, not even 10 by 10 feet, I think, smaller than that, I think. (Laughs) It was really small.

And you did most of the work?

I was the only one that worked there, eh.

(Laughter)

Then when I got sick, then my brother was staying with us at that time. He would take over for a day or so (and) my husband would take care of it (too). But when I was in the hospital, well, my brother took over the job.

And you know, being that it was a post office and it was located in the store, did it in any way serve like a social center for Kaaawa people?

It was always, even when I was retiring, it was something like that. People would come in, talk story. That's how I was able to keep up with the latest. Not anymore.

(Laughter)
Those days, what would they talk about, you know?

Oh, lot of things. About the farm and the ball games and their families. Lot of community affairs too. Of course, some gossip too.

(Laughter)

Was there a bench or something that would attract people?

We had a bench in front of the store, uh huh. But when they put up the new building, then there was no bench.

And, you know, you eventually had two children, but you continued working as a postmistress for twenty-eight years. How did you manage being a mother and working all that time?

Well, my mother was there. And my house was right next door to the store, to the post office, so the kids used to come in and (visit me whenever they wanted to). I would play with them for a few minutes in between customers. Those days, when I first started, it wasn't that busy so I used to take care of the store too, at the same time. My mother took care of them (my children), feeding them and all those things. Then by the time she had died, well, they were old enough to take care of themselves. It was right next door, so if anything happened or they needed anything, they could just run over and talk to me. So it was really nice, being close to your job and children.

How long did you stay and help with the store itself?

Until we gave it up. That was in 1955, '56, I don't remember. That's when I gave up my business. I sold it to my brother.

Oh. And you did that for twenty-eight years and you also mentioned, you were an Avon lady.

I was an Avon lady about twenty years.

How did you get involved in that?

A friend of mine was doing it. And she didn't have time, so she wanted to give it up, so she asked me if I'd like to do it. I didn't care to but, I thought,
well, all right I'll do it. In those days, as long as you're not a second-class office, you're allowed to have a business in the same room. So I did it for twenty years. Then the post office went up to second-class, so I had to give it up. But as soon as I retired, they called me again, so I'm in it again.

(Laughter)

MK: Not really retired!

EY: No, no. (Laughs) It's good though, I mean, I miss the people. It's not good to just stay home all the time, so that's a good reason to go out and talk to people. So I enjoy it.

MK: You spent, you know, all your life practically either Kahana Valley or Kaaawa, windward area. And what do you think has been the most major changes in this area that you've noticed?

EY: The development, the houses, and the traffic. That's the thing that really changed. And then the population too. The different kinds of people. In the old days, all we had were Japanese and Hawaiian and few Chinese, one or two families, Chinese families. But now we have all kinds of nationalities. It's good in a way, but the closeness is not there. You know? In the old days, you knew everybody and oh, it was so nice, the relationship was so nice. But now, half of the people, I don't know anymore.

MK: Why do you think it's become that way, that you don't know half of the people anymore?

EY: Well, because of all these apartments and houses that people just buy for investment purposes. In the meantime, they just rent it out, you know. People keep moving in and out. That's all. You can't get to know them.

MK: When do you think that type of change started happening?

EY: Oh, let's see. When was that? When they started building all these homes around here. That must have been about ten years ago, I think, about there. Maybe a little more. And (there's) Makaua Village up there too.

MK: I know that you really worked hard to get your children exposed to areas outside of Kaaawa and they
went to Mid-Pac [Mid-Pacific Institute] and now they're living Mainland and Maui. What do you hope for their future, for your children?

EY: Well, right now, I'd wish they'd get married.

(Laughter)

But I'm glad they're independent and they can support themselves. As long as they're doing things that are good, helping others, I'm happy about that.

MK: How about the future of the Kaaawa area? What would you like to see brought back, or changed?

EY: Well, it's going to be pretty hard to change, but I hope there won't be any more developments. It's so crowded too. I think this is enough, enough development, more than enough, I think. It's hard to bring back some of the old things. Another thing too I noticed, we have this community association. I wish more people would take interest in what's going on and come to those meetings. That's another good way to get to know everybody too, but hardly anybody comes. That's sad. Because I remember when we were young, my folks, they couldn't speak English, so you know the PTAs [Parent Teacher Associations]? They couldn't go to the meetings because they didn't understand what was going on, so we used to go in their place. (Laughs)

MK: Yeah?

EY: We used to go, the kids. All us kids used to go. And we used to help make the decisions, and things. We used to vote too just like anybody else. (Laughs)

MK: How young were you?

EY: I was in grammar school, elementary school. (Laughs) I must have been about seventh, eighth grade, somewhere around there. Seventh, eighth grade, I think. Oh, some of my neighbors' children, they used to come too. (Laughs)

MK: It was a good foundation, yeah? Experience.

EY: Your PTA now is, Parent Teacher Student Association, now students get involved. Well, we were involved way back then. (Laughs).
MK: I didn't know that!

(Laughter)

EY: Yeah.

(Laughter)

MK: Talking with Bob [Stauffer], he was mentioning to me that you knew [the entertainer] Hilo Hattie quite well.

EY: Yes, yes.

MK: I was wondering, how did you get to know Hilo Hattie?

EY: Well, they were looking for a place. And so they came to the post office and asked me and I told them about the place up on the hill, in the back of the post office. So they went up to look at it and they bought the place. And they lived there quite a while. So that's how I got to know them. Hilo Hattie was such a humble person, very humble. Oh! She was such a nice person. She was such a nice person. And so was her husband. They were both very nice.

MK: What do you remember most about them, especially things they did out here in Kaaawa?

EY: Well, they didn't do too much. They were not involved in too many things out here, because she was working and he worked too. He was a musician and so (they never had much time). But they were very nice to everybody.

MK: It wasn't too long ago, yeah that she passed away?

EY: Um hum, not too long ago.

MK: As a closing question to the interview, as you reflect on your life, what do you think were the high points of your life?

EY: (Laughs) That's hard to say. High points. Hard to say. Well, all I can say is I had a good life, although we were very poor when we were growing up, you know. I think about my father quite often because, well, he thought a lot about us. And you know how Orientals are. Especially the men folks. They never express their feelings. But I know he cared for all us kids and so I'm thankful that I had
good parents, yeah. And I think a lot about my mother too. How hard she had to work to take care of us. And I'm thankful for my brothers too. All my brothers, especially the older ones, who had to work so hard to help support us. But as far as my life is concerned, I can't think of any highlights.

(Laughter)

Although I used to enjoy working in the post office, and the store too.

MK: Is there anything else you'd like to kind of mention, especially for people who might be listening to this, reading it in the future?

EY: Oh, you know, we hear so much about what went on during the war [i.e., World War II], to the Japanese people. How they were interned and things like that. How they never trusted them. The haoles never trusted them. You know, I think about my Japanese [-language] school teacher too. He was a terrific teacher. The way he graded our work too, it's not according to your mentality. According to how much you try to do your work, that's how he used to grade us. And I'll never forget, because he always taught us, "Take the good of the Japanese and be a better American citizen." He used to teach us that all the time and I think that's really good, because there are a lot of (wonderful) things in every nationality, there's lots of good things. And if they could take that and then be a better American. Oh, this country would be a wonderful country.

Mk: That's a nice thing.

EY: Eh, that's what I like to tell the kids about too.

(Laughter)

MK: Anyway, I want to thank you for the interview session.

EY: Oh, you're welcome. I hope this was interesting.

(Laughs)

MK: It was and I think the people will enjoy reading it.

END OF INTERVIEW
FIVE LIFE HISTORIES

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