

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Aiichi Nakamoto, 90, retired salesman

*"Also up here in front of our house, all pasture like, see? We used to go get wood from there and cook. No more light or gas stove like that. One section oil stove, two burner. And the rest we cook rice like that with wood."*

Aiichi Nakamoto, Japanese, was born on December 10, 1894, in Yamaguchi-ken, Japan. In June 1903, Aiichi and his mother joined his father, a sugarcane worker at Aiea Plantation, Oahu.

Prior to his father's death in 1914, the Nakamoto family moved to 1513 Kam IV Road. At that time the area was a sparsely-settled one, dotted by pastures, taro patches, and hog farms.

As a youth, Aiichi attended Iolani School and Chuo Gakuin where he was a member of its second graduating class. While a student, he was also employed as an errand boy by the Japanese Consulate.

In December 1916, he was hired as a stock clerk at Theo H. Davies and Company, Ltd. Forty-four years later, he retired as a salesman from the same firm.

Today, he still lives in the Kam IV Road area of Kalihi and participates in the Kalihi Mauka Chihōjinkai's activities. He is a community volunteer and an active member of various senior citizens organizations.

Tape No. 11-6-1-83  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
with  
Aichi Nakamoto (AN)  
December 14, 1983  
Kalihi, Oahu  
BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Aichi Nakamoto at his home in Kalihi, Oahu, on December 14, 1983.

Mr. Nakamoto, I'm going to start the interview by asking you about your early life.

AN: Yeah.

MK: And I'll go in order, yeah?

AN: I see.

MK: So, can you first tell me when and where you were born?

AN: Oh, in Yamaguchi[-ken] near Iwakuni.

MK: What year were you born?

AN: Well, let's see now, 1894.

MK: What were your parents' names?

AN: My parents' names? My father is Eitaro and my mother, Matsu.

MK: When did you all come to Hawaii?

AN: Well, my father came about three or four years ahead of us, see? Later on, my mother took me here, when I was about eight. I think-- eight or nine, I'm not sure. Yeah.

MK: I think you told me you came in June, 1903?

AN: Yeah--something like that. Nineteen three [1903], I think.

MK: How many brothers and sisters were in your family?

AN: Oh, later on I get one sister, that's all.

MK: During your early years in Hawaii, before you came to Kalihi, can you tell me where you lived and what your father did for a living?

AN: Yeah--my father, when I came, he was at Puuloa--Puuloa working at plantation; Aiea Plantation. But later on, moved to Moanalua where the airport now--used to be a sugarcane field before, you know. They call [it] contract [work]. My father has about eleven or twelve men working under him. He control. I don't know about how many acres but anyway, quite big acres of sugar cane. Yeah, that's the kind of job, yeah. And I was going to school from there for a short while. I cannot tell how many years but anyway not too long. I think my father worked about two contract, maybe one and half. That, I don't know. But anyway, we moved up to Wahiawa, see? That's about my early time.

MK: What was your father doing in Wahiawa?

AN: He's trying to start his own business--own pineapple business. But oh, the trouble with the lease business come, something wrong, I think. Before that, we went down Kipapa Valley to build a home, see? But when he came out to town and talk about the lease, something wrong so he quit. He was there about one, two years under--what was the boss name? [James] Dole! Yeah, that's right--Dole. He was under him for about one or one and half years to practice how to raise pineapple, you know, and learn how to raise pineapple. Then he try to do his own business. But about the lease, as I say--yeah, [they had some trouble so] they quit.

MK: You mentioned that while your family was in the Moanalua area, and later when you went to Wahiawa area, you went to school little bit, yeah?

AN: Yeah, I went school about half, one year.

MK: What schools were you attending?

AN: Well, that time there was no English school, you know. Just Japanese [-language] school. Yeah. Not exactly school but [the teacher is] one who knows how to talk and write, eh? Bring the children together, yeah. Some big boy, small boy, you know--all mix up. Those days, that's why--there was no class, you know. Just we get together and talk, that's about all. Not English school. We don't call that "school." Well, anyway, young guys get together, learn how to talk and write, see?

MK: And before your father died in 1914, your family moved to Kalihi?

AN: Yeah.

MK: Where did your family live in Kalihi, that first time you moved in?

- AN: Well, when we start, we moved from Wahiawa to here and so on. In Kam IV Road, opposite Rose Street.
- MK: During that time, what kind of people lived in that area by Kam IV Road and Rose Street?
- AN: Yeah, let's see--what kind of people was living there? All those, those time, most Japanese people are farmers, you know. Some raise flowers, hog raiser up here. Very few people, not too much.
- MK: What does that area look like? Right around Kam IV Road and Rose Street?
- AN: Well, not like today. Yeah--the houses are scarce here and there. Most of the people, we all know each other, see?
- MK: For that time, what about water and electricity in that area?
- AN: Oh, fortunately when we came here, you know, the sewer was all ready. Yeah, but not right away. But we get quite early. Yeah, and electric also; we have. At the beginning now, we used the lamp, yeah--that's right. So there was no light. (Clean the lamp was my job.) Yeah, we was working under the lamp. But sewer line quite early came up now.
- MK: How about water?
- AN: Water was already, yeah. Water was already. But not every house has pipe, you know. They have one pipe up here--we have to go and carry [water] at the beginning, in our five-gallon can, on both side [we] carry on our shoulder.
- MK: How far did people have to walk with their five-gallon can of water?
- AN: Well, depend on where the house is, see? Yeah, I know one of the house was using running ditch water. Most everything they wash, bath and things like that--all ditch water.
- MK: Was that the irrigation ditch that irrigated the taro patches?
- AN: Yes, taro patch. There was one ditch from way up Kalihi Uka to down this way on the side of the mountain, you know. Yeah--of course there is another ditch under here to sea, on Kam IV Street.
- MK: And those patches . . .
- AN: [Those taro patches went] way down to King Street, near the church. You know where the church is? Yeah, you can see the church from here.
- MK: You mean the Kalihi Union Church?

- AN: Yeah, Kalihi Union Church. Could be seen from here and also all that ocean you can see, nice view, you know.
- MK: You know those taro patches, what type of people farmed the taro?
- AN: Oh, Chinese--Chinese was working there. Lots of Hawaiian people come and catch frog there, you know--nighttime with the lantern.
- MK: In the taro patch?
- AN: Yeah, in the taro patch.
- MK: How about yourself or your children later, did they play around in the taro patches?
- AN: Oh, of course. Also up here in front of our house, all pasture like, see? We used to go get wood from there and cook. No more light or gas stove like that. One section oil stove, two burner. And the rest we cook rice like that with the wood.
- MK: And you know in the early days, when you were a child growing up near Kam IV Road and Rose Street, what was your father doing for a living?
- AN: Well, he was sick man, you know. And later on, when I was about twenty years old, he went to Japan and pass away there. He was there about couple years. You know, as I told you before, first when we come down from Wahiawa to here, is because the loan. I don't know how much, but anyway he cannot pay, so he take this job-- that is tōfu-making. Tōfu factory more like, see? Today, big factory, but those days small--small business. He took over and he did about one year, I think--tōfu-making, then sold to another fellow.
- MK: Then went to Japan and passed away?
- AN: Yeah, yeah . . .
- MK: The last time I spoke with you, you said you were a schoolboy at the Japan Consul. Can you just explain what a schoolboy did?
- AN: Going to school, yeah. That's where I went and graduate Japanese Central Institute. What you call that was there? Chuo Gakuin, yeah. Central Institute. Then I used to go Iolani for a while, yeah. That's about all I done.
- MK: At the Japan Consul, when you were working as a schoolboy, what kind of work did you have to do when you stayed there?
- AN: I used to help garden when I get time. I used to help waiter. Dinner time, I used to help once in a while--running around, you know. Those people in Japanese Consulate come from Japan that

don't know how to talk and they don't know where to buy, so I used to run around with a bicycle--help them to buy something. And when laundry come, take out laundry for them--that's the kind, easy job.

MK: So you lived at the Consulate and had room and board there--and went to school from there?

AN: Yeah, that's right. I get lots of time to study, you know. Very fortunate.

MK: Were there other young men doing the same thing at the Japanese Consulate?

AN: No, only myself. But this is not in the office, you know. Home side.

MK: Who was the Japanese Consulate, when you were doing this?

AN: Well, when first I went, General Consul was Ueno, I think. But about two weeks later, he went home to Japan, see? Then next came to, what was his name? I kinda forget already. Anyway, when I was there for long time, Arita was the longest one. And later on, [Consul General] Arita--he came to [be] Ambassador to the United States, then Foreign Minister.

MK: How did you arrange that situation to be able to be a schoolboy at the Japan Consulate?

AN: Japanese[-language] school teacher--yeah. One of the Japanese[-language] school teacher's sister. That is sister's husband was working Japanese Consul, see? So he's the one that recommend.

MK: You were there for eight years?

AN: Maybe seven or six, I don't know exactly but anyway around seven, eight years.

MK: And graduated from Chuo Gakuin?

AN: Yeah.

MK: I was wondering, those days at Chuo Gakuin--what was the schooling like?

AN: Well, that time was systematic already. But our class, the ages are all different. Some young, some old, some like my age. From the beginning, we didn't start from the same age, you see. But the lower class, they all right. Like, not high school, you know--like grammar school, the age area all right, see. School start [same time, same age] already. But like my age, the hard place, the age are not even--some old, some young.

MK: At Chuo Gakuin, what kind of shūshin were you taught?

AN: Oh, we used to learn exactly the same as Japan. We didn't get no local-made textbook. Later on, when I was taking care of Japanese school [i.e., Kalihi Nihon Go Gakkō], we change--we change, trying to make the Japanese boys and girls to be good Americans. But those days, no more books like that, see? We all learn from Japan one.

MK: During our last interview, you told me that on December 1, 1916, you started work at Theo H. Davies?

AN: Oh, yeah.

MK: How did you get that job there?

AN: Oh, Mr. Ozawa--they used to be down here working Davies. One day he came up and because I was already age, about twenty--twenty-one, I think, he came around and [ask], "You want to work?" And my mother, anxious to do some working, see? So then I went.

MK: What kind of work did you do for Davies, in the beginning?

AN: First, store clerk. Yeah, dry good department--store clerk, learn the merchandise. Name of the merchandise and where the merchandise is. First I have to write down what table, what kind of merchandise this is. When the order comes in, you pick the order. You don't know where to pick, see, so you have a notebook--what number table you find what and what and what. That's how I learn. About two years, I was store clerk, and 1918, that time the war end--I was sent to Hilo. I stay there about three months and a half.

MK: You told me that in Hilo, you had an unusual experience as a nakohodo. Can you tell me that again?

AN: Oh, that's a big story, that. You know, those days, when I talk little bit English, they think I'm great, you know. That's why I think [I was asked to be a nakahodo or matchmaker]. When I was there [in Hilo] for three months and a half, I borrow one room, I stay upstairs. There was one lady behind, one old lady. She wash my clothes every week. She has one daughter, say she's gonna marry. So she [i.e., bride's mother] ask me to be a matchmaker. But it's already made [match is made]. It's already set, but you know in old days, they wanna put between-man, see? So, I don't know, this is my first experience. [I don't know if] it's right or not, but anyway, I went inside and let them marry--yeah.

MK: So those days, it was unusual to find a man like you that can speak English?

AN: Maybe so.

MK: Oh, and then when you return to Honolulu, you said you took care of the woolens for suits--what kind of suits were made?

AN: Well, after I come home from Hilo, they give me a position to take care of woolens. Then I have to buy the woolen, I have to find out what kind of pattern, what kind of weight--all those things. You gotta find out what good for Hawaii. We don't need too much heavy stuff. So I took care about three, four years that, I had one boy under me, eh? Cottons, you know, everything like that--but I start to go out [as a salesman], see? I left the young boy behind and I start go outside looking around the tailors. Get order, meantime--then later on, not only the woolen but whole thing [I took care].

MK: What is the whole thing?

AN: All the merchandise. Up and down from drug up to dry goods and notion and jewelry--everything, everything in the dry good department.

MK: So from 1921 or '22 to 1960, you were a Davies salesman going outside?

AN: Yeah--yeah.

MK: As a salesman, what area did you cover?

AN: First of all, when I start, I used to cover all over the [Honolulu] town. But later on, the business getting more and more--divide into two sections. I was taking care of the Western side, from River [Street] on Ewa side.

MK: Those days when you first started, what kind of stores did you go to in Kalihi?

AN: Oh, mostly all the general stores--all the general stores, because every store selling all little bit dry goods, notion. Those days, not like today--some house has dry goods, liquor, foodstuff, everything they used to carry, you know.

MK: In those early days, what were the names of the stores in Kalihi?

AN: Those early days? Yamane is one of the oldest, I think. Fujii, there's one--Kalihi-Kai. Oh, there are quite a bit. Terada. Terada is not too (inaudible). He used to have a wholesale store in Hotel (Street)--Market Street. I used to go around there, too, see. I forget what kind of store was before. Olden days--the stores are scarce. Not too much like today. Of course, you don't see too much small stores. But those days, there's so many small stores. All over.

MK: Those days at Davies, did the salesmen go only to their nationalities or did they go to all kinds of stores?



AN: Well, we used to get Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese fellas [i.e., salesmen]. We go all to our same nation--we no like bother Chinese stores because Chinese salesmen there, see?

MK: When you look back on your long years as a Davies salesman, what do you think about Davies and your work for them?

AN: Oh, that was wonderful store, company, I think. They treat fair. I liked to work for them.

MK: Last time, you told me that now days, people's feelings toward their business is different from the kind of feeling you had for Davies--can you explain?

AN: Those days, person--not only myself but everybody, they work for the firm. They work for the firm; they not working for themselves. They don't look watch like today--today, they watch the watch, what time. Ha, those days--no. We don't look watch. Yeah, sometime, boss tell me, "Nakamoto, come and see this pattern. What you think--which is good, you think?" Or sometime we stay five o'clock--six o'clock, we don't care the time. We work for the firm, see? Not for myself, but today, maybe change, yeah? That, I don't know today.

MK: Yeah. You told me that you got married when you were twenty-seven years old, yeah? That was about 1921, '22, because you were born 1894. How did you get to marry your wife?

AN: Well, long time ago when my father was sick and went back to Japan, he stayed at his sister's place. [While there] my father, before he passed away, ask [someone] to be my wife, see? Then later on, my mother went back and bring her, see?

MK: What was your wife's name?

AN: Chiyo. Chiyoko.

MK: After you folks got married, how many children did you have in your family?

AN: Five altogether. But one pass away. Four left right now--four.

MK: When your children came, where were you living?

AN: Right here. They all born here.

MK: Right in this house?

AN: Yeah.

MK: This is near Kam IV Road on Kini Street.

AN: But there wasn't no Kini Place before--Kini Street. This was a pasture, only one house. Only one, here and there--few houses.

MK: What kind of neighbors did you have around here?

AN: All good neighbors.

MK: Uh huh. What were their names?

AN: Names? Well, there was one there--Yoshioka--and Yasutake--Katayama. Oh, further up, where the hog raisers--there's quite a bit. One down here--Ota.

MK: When your children were school age, what schools did they attend?

AN: Oh, they attend Japanese school in Kalihi Waena. What was the name of the school down Middle Street (near Shafter)?

MK: Fern School?

AN: Fern School. Yeah. First go Union Church kindergarten, then to there. Then after they graduate, this high school down here. Farrington--yeah.

MK: How about intermediate school?

AN: Intermediate? Let's see now--I think they have same place, eh?  
No . . .

MK: They went to Kalakaua?

AN: No, I don't think they went Kalakaua. No, they didn't. I think they have intermediate school those days. I'm not sure.

MK: But for Japanese school, they went to Kalihi Nihon Go Gakkō? Where is Kalihi Nihon Go Gakkō?

AN: It's now under the highway. On Kam IV Road. Little further up--Yamane place [Kalihi Shopping Center]. All our place was taken [for] the road--highway.

MK: Oh--I know you've been involved with Kalihi Nihon Go Gakkō many years. Can you tell me about when it was founded and a little bit about its history?

AN: That school was organized before I come to Kalihi, you know. I think that was 1907--yeah. When I went there, they put me in today's high school second grade, I think. Or first grade. Yeah. They just give me a small short test. Those days, there's only one teacher in Japanese school. Has lantern--we start from five o'clock to [six] o'clock in the morning, then second class from [six] to [seven]. Then, children go to English school come back

(three to four and four to five p.m.). Four classes in one day.

MK: In those days, teacher--what kind of teacher was he?

AN: Oh, he cannot talk English. He only know Japanese. Later on, he moved to Mainland. Nice fellow was. He get up early in the morning-- five o'clock, waiting for us to come, you know.

MK: Later on when your children grew up and went to that school, you were involved as an officer, yeah? In the school? Can you explain what you did for the school?

AN: Well, gradually, children start to increase. So we have to make school building. I think two times I build a school room. Oh, I don't know what else. I make all kind officers there: secretary, vice president, and president. Long time.

MK: You told me about some changes in the textbooks?

AN: Oh, yeah.

MK: Can you explain?

AN: Well, we spend quite a bit, not only our school. They call this United Japanese school, eh? Organize group to make a good textbook for the good Americans. When war start, FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] question me, about this textbook. Of course, I don't read inside but we make the textbook good for these American children. To be a good American, eh? That's why I told them, "You mark my word," see--what this young boys gonna do. We spend quite a bit on textbook.

MK: You told me the FBI questioned you, but they never interned you.

AN: No, they didn't.

MK: How come?

AN: Well, I don't know. But Davies protect me, I think. Many time this FBI come and interview all this workingman in there--what kind of man I am, I think. They didn't question me that's why I don't know, but they say, "Nakamoto, see that boy? He's from FBI, you know. He's right here talking with manager now."

MK: Were you worried when the FBI was checking up?

AN: Yeah. One day I came home [to Theo H. Davies] from outside to do something, eh? Then one of the boy [at work] told me, "Yeah, they right here now, he's talking with manager." Yeah. They trying to, though. They're trying to pull me, you know. But lucky I wasn't. I think the manager talk good to me, eh?

- MK: I know that you were also active in the Kalihi Mauka Chihōjin Kai. Can you tell me about its history?
- AN: Yeah. I don't know when I organize that, though. But that was before the war [World War II]. We still continue here. All people get together because those days so many people come in, rob, you know. So we organize and protect.
- MK: How did you protect each other?
- AN: Ha, ha--I bought a whistle. Each house got whistle. Once you hear the whistle blowing--everybody blow. Blow the whistle and all go outside the street and [write down] the [license] number of the automobile that pass, see. We caught one or two guys.
- MK: Gee. And can you tell me about the Kalihi Mauka Chihōjin Kai's shinnen enkai and the picnics--that kind of things they do?
- AN: Yeah, we used to do. Those days, moving picture is all over, you know. But from here on, hard to go downtown, eh? So once in a while, maybe couple times in a year, hire the movie picture people and we operate up here--put up the screen and tent and things like that. New Year like that, we used to put up tent; we buy all kind of tools. Not tools but kitchenware. They cook themselves, see? New Year party.
- MK: How about funerals?
- AN: Yeah, we all go. Any bad things like that happen, eh? We all get together. Not like today. All get together--everyone come out help each other.
- MK: How did everyone help each other in the bad times? What did they do?
- AN: They all come out and do. Not stay home and pay only money. Ladies all came out and cook and clean and prepare everything.
- MK: Uh huh--what about the men?
- AN: Oh, men, too. Just the same. Put up tent, make the table. They all was good people, those days.
- MK: How about weddings?
- AN: Just same. Wedding, not like teahouse today. We don't go teahouse. I wonder those days, they have teahouse? We don't know. So everytime when marry or funeral, put up tent. We make there--own party place.
- MK: You also mentioned that now days, you have a Kini Place Association?
- AN: Yeah. Over here.

MK: How many families now?

AN: Today? Well, as you see, all different nationalities--more Filipino people and majority Filipino people now, I think. This district here. No, about half-half, I think.

MK: But you have a Kini Place Chihōjin Kai?

AN: Yeah. We still continue. (Not Kini. Is same old name, Kalihi Mauka Chihōjin Kai.)

MK: Now days, how many families in the Chihōjin Kai?

AN: About thirty-six, I think.

MK: This Chihōjin Kai is all Japanese?

AN: Right now, yeah. All Japanese.

MK: You know, you've lived Kalihi long time. So I'm going to ask you questions now about some of the changes in Kalihi, yeah? Some events. People tell me that in Kalihi, there was a flood in the 1920s--what do you remember about that big flood?

AN: The flood down here? Oh, that's a big job that I have. Yeah. Oh, that time I was head of searching that missing people. Two, three guys pass away, you know, that time the flood. One from Waipahu and one or two from in that valley--Kalihi, near the stream. So we cannot find the bodies, eh? So I was the leader, lots of people from downtown and neighbors came around and help. I make so much section, so many people [in] one section search so much places here and there.

Meantime, we have to prepare lunch, eh? Ladies stay behind, do the cooking, make musubi, like that. It takes about one, two weeks, I think--search around. We all divide into section and make a center [at] Japanese School [Kalihi Nihon Go Gakko]. Lots of donation on old clothes, machine, shōyu, rice, and all kinds. The donation come from all outside and money come in, too, from other islands. So we divide [among] some of the farmers, their place all wash away, see? Those time, not only Japanese. Some Chinese fellow in Moanalua Valley, up here Kalihi Valley--they all come, too, and we give 'em bag rice and barrel shōyu and things like that. But only one, two Chinese come down and say thank you very much for helping. No other Japanese come, only two Chinese came. Come down, thank you very much for helping--that shows the Chinese are better than Japanese. (Chuckles)

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So that was a really bad flood?

AN: Yeah.

MK: In Kalihi, how wide an area of damage was there?

AN: Well, from Kalihi Valley--[down] Kalihi Stream, on King Street to about Yamane Store, now supermarket there, Foodland. Just between there, because that bridge there on King Street was stuck. And the water overflow from around here. This School Street was open already, and the School Street stream was stuck, too--all the trees and mauka bridge all broken. Waters overflow and down makai side, too--all overflow and just run into where the [Kalihi] Union Church today. All around there was just like a river.

MK: But two, three people died?

AN: Two or three, I think. One lady and one children and one man from Ewa. Yeah, he was coming back from downtown and around the [Kalihi] Union Church, in front, the car stuck. If he don't go out, maybe he was saved, see? But, the car stuck, so he went out from the car. The water wash him away, eh?

You know, my first wife was in the hospital that time. That's why I know that bridge was stuck. When I pass there afternoon about four, five o'clock, I can pass, see? But I cannot come home. The water is too much. That's why I remember.

MK: Then we had World War II come, yeah? Nineteen forty-one?

AN: Yeah.

MK: When the war came in Kalihi--how were things in Kalihi?

AN: Oh, I myself, I didn't know that time the war break out until next day. I went to downtown work, then say, "Ey, war start."

"What you talking, nah, not war?"

"Sure, war."

No wonder all the street corners, all the soldiers all standing up, eh? I didn't know. Two soldiers was outside here watching the tunnel, eh. I told them, "When you fellas get cold, wake me up, I give you hot coffee." Next morning, they hold up one slop car. Big noise, they talk loud, eh? I wake up, I thought they wake me up. So I run upstairs, put light, I make coffee. I bring 'em outside, "You fellas cold, eh? You go ahead, drink coffee." One of the soldiers, he run inside and he shut off my light, you know.

That was blackout, eh? But I didn't think about wars, eh?

MK: Those days, what kind of restrictions were there on the citizens?

AN: Only blackout, that's about all.

MK: How about getting supplies--those days was ration, huh?

AN: Oh, yeah. But that was all right. Get everything except fresh fish, that's about all. It was scarce. Meat, once in a while, you can get.

MK: Were you in charge of rationing? Any coupons or anything for this area?

AN: No. Oh, you mean gasoline like that? No, we get from company, see. My own car, somehow you know, we can get, you know.

MK: So not too bad for you?

AN: Not too bad. Yeah.

MK: Then another big thing that happened after the war, they were making the housing up here, yeah? Kalihi Valley Housing, about 1950? What kind of changes did you notice over here when they were starting to make the housing?

AN: Well, they [government] chase them [hog raisers] away. All those hog raisers. Hog raisers make good money during the war times, see? Before that, Chinese used to make good money on hog--buta, yeah? But during the wartime, the government set the price, so they cannot sell high or low but good money. And all this hog raiser get good food from Schofield, Fort Shafter. They sure make good money that time.

MK: When the housing was coming up, they were evicted?

AN: Yeah. They were evicted to some--way down Waianae or some other faraway place, eh?

MK: You know, I notice Kam IV Road is a big road now, yeah?

AN: Oh, yeah--today, we have good roads.

MK: How about before? What kind of road was it?

AN: We don't call that "road." Oh, sure, dirty road was. You get bicycle, you have to carry the bicycle. You no can ride on bicycle on a rainy day. That's the kind of road was.

MK: So until 1954 then, the road was still not too good?

AN: No, no. Before that, we have small road, nice road, eh, paved road. But long time ago when first we move up here, those days, it's not a road.

MK: Then, about 1960, the Wilson Tunnel opened, yeah?

AN: This one here? Yeah. That's when the Kini Place came up, and all this pastures started [change] to housing. House coming up. All open, was pretty soon, when the tunnel was open.

MK: You know, like your house over here--you lived here long time. How did you get the land?

AN: Well, that time was lease. Later on, when I was sick, the boss--Mendonca, yeah--he came around and [said], "Ey, Nakamoto, you ask [for] the first chance, how about taking over my place?"

"Sure, I take."

"Fifteen acre."

"What, fifteen acre? You trying to kill me?" I tell him. "You give me only the place I stay right now--two lot enough." Yeah, that's when I bought.

MK: You remember what year?

AN: I don't know. I forget already. Maybe before the war.

MK: So you were very fortunate, then, that you got this place?

AN: Oh, yeah. Of course. I ask him for first chance, see. So they give me first chance. Oh, all over it was fifteen acres, can't do nothing--too much. They ask me thirty-five cents a square [foot] for fifteen acre. Oh, that's big amount, you know. So people around here for Mendonca small section--they all get thirty-five cents a square, see, but my place, "If you like, only your place now I must ask you eighty-five cents." So I pay eighty-five cents here.

MK: How come? How come higher?

AN: Well, they subdivide, that's why. You know, later on, that Kini Street came up, then they divide 'em up so I get two lot.

MK: I notice over here, you have a police substation, yeah?

AN: Yeah.

MK: That came up in 1961. I was wondering, before that came up, how safe was over here?



AN: Oh, as you say, we get Chihōjin Kai watching. No houses like now, you know, we can count the houses.

MK: So those days you didn't have to have the substation?

AN: Oh, yeah. We don't need those days. Those people was all good, you see. You can open the door and sleep. That's right, you know.

MK: Different now days, huh?

AN: Yeah.

MK: You know, now days you've retired, yeah? Retired for quite a long time. What have you been doing since you retired?

AN: Since I retired, I only work for somebody, work [i.e., do volunteer service] for the people. I used to go Lanakila Center, I used to go Blind Center, and also a long time on that hospital right here. Maluhia. Yeah. That's where I get that, what you call, senior citizen honor.

MK: That's when you were honored, in 1971, yeah?

AN: That was 1971 or '72.

MK: Your volunteer award.

AN: Yeah.

MK: Then, as I bring the interview to a close, what do you think about Kalihi? What are your feelings about Kalihi?

AN: Must be good, eh? I stay how many--must be good place, yeah? It's a good place. No more squawking.

MK: Why do you say Kalihi is a good place?

AN: Because I can stay long, eh? If not, I gotta move someplace. Yeah, neighbors all good, everything is good, really. Climate good, the airs are good.

MK: And you raised your children over here, your grandchildren also lived in Kalihi, yeah? What are your feelings about raising a family in Kalihi?

AN: Well, I think is good place. That's why--yeah. See, all the schools are near, eh? Not too far--yeah. The education part is all right. Somebody say Kalihi not so good, but you know, I like this place. Yeah.

MK: You know, when you look into the future for Kalihi, what do you hope? For your children and for the other people that live in

Kalihi . . .

AN: I don't think there will be change. Just like this, residential section, hardly any change, I think.

MK: Now days, when you look back on your life, you know--you're almost ninety years, what do you think about your own life in Hawaii?

AN: I don't know why I live so long. I feel kind of shame. But I think my life was all right. I think I pay my fare. All people was good to me anyway. I was fortunate, that's what I think myself. All my family good, all my children good. Yeah. I'm sorry my wife pass away little early, see--they sure miss.

MK: But otherwise, your life has been a good life--in Kalihi?

AN: Yeah, good life. Good life--not only in Kalihi but all in town. Town people is good, too. Yeah.

MK: From the days you were a salesman?

AN: But one thing I like tell is all this young fellas, they don't go church. I like they go church. Those who go church earlier, they have a good luck quicker. Happy life. Yeah.

MK: You're a Buddhist?

AN: Yeah.

MK: How come there's no Buddhist church in the Kalihi area?

AN: Well, that's what I says, people don't go that's why. I organize one little club here, when my young time. We used to have not exactly a church, but once a month, priest come from downtown, give us a sermon, but today, cannot continue. Young fellas don't go, see? Okinawa side, too. I organize one time, but it was all dry up--nobody take over after.

MK: So that's why . . .

AN: Even Susannah Wesley Home, too. One lady, one man come up here for open Sunday School--I used to take care of them, but they cannot keep up on account of people don't come. If they increase, if everybody live, they be all right, see. But gradually, you know, they all go away. The parents don't think about religious. That's what I think. Yeah. I also think I work for nothing, you know. Stop, fade away in couple years.

MK: That's why Kalihi has no Kalihi Hongwanji or Kalihi Soto Mission, you think?

AN: Yeah. No more. Hard, you know, this kind--people don't cooperate,

eh? Cannot continue.

MK: So that's about the only thing you wish for Kalihi?

AN: I like everybody go church. When you start to go church, (your mind will be broad and calm with many, many happiness.)

MK: Well, I want to thank you for today's interview and I learned a lot about Kalihi.

AN: Don't mention it.

END OF INTERVIEW

**KALIHI:**  
**Place of Transition**

**Vol. I**

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL  
HISTORY PROJECT**

**Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawaii at Manoa**

**JUNE 1984**