BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: MASAKO OGAWA, retired teacher

Masako (Kubota) Ogawa was born December 24, 1913 in Hanapepe. Her father, Saichiro was the principal of the Japanese Language School in Hanapepe until 1922 when he moved his family to Waimea to become the language school principal there.

Masako was an 11 year old elementary school student in Waimea at the time of the 1924 strike. Strikers lived at the abandoned Hanapepe Japanese Language School where she had been born. She remembers seeing the bodies of the dead strikers at the Waimea Courthouse.

Masako graduated from the University of Hawaii and taught high school Japanese until her retirement. She currently resides in Kapaa and is active with the Kauai retired teachers, Kapaa senior citizens, and is a supporting member of the Lihue Christian Church.
Tape No. 5-6-1-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

(Mrs.) Masako Ogawa (MO)

August 19, 1978

Lihue, Kauai

BY: Gael Gouveia (GG)

GG: [This is an interview] with Mrs. Masako Ogawa, in Lihue, Kauai. The date is August 19, 1978, and the interviewer is Gael Gouveia.

MO: I'm living at Wailua House Lots now.

GG: That's where you live, fine. Can you tell me, first of all, where you were born.

MO: At Hanapepe, Kauai.

GG: In what year?

MO: 1913, Christmas Eve.

GG: And your father, what was he doing, at that time?

MO: He was principal at Waimea—when I was born, he was principal at Hanapepe Japanese Language School.

GG: And that is the language school that was eventually leased by the Filipino strikers during the 1924 Strike?

MO: That's right, yes.

GG: When did you move away from there?

MO: 1922, I think it was in September. Because my sister was born September 16 or 17, just about a week or two weeks after we moved to Waimea.

GG: And why did you move from Hanapepe to Waimea?

MO: Well, Waimea Japanese Language School was a larger school, and they (my parents) had a better offer, I think.
GG: Did somebody else take over the Hanapepe Japanese School, then, in 1922?

MO: Not right away. At the time, just before we moved to Waimea, the language school was being held at Eleele. Eleele, Hanapepe, and Wahiawa Japanese Language School teachers combined and used the Eleele public school classrooms. And, so they had a sort of a division of labor; they could have different teachers teaching different grade levels. And as usual, they had two periods. You know, the early class and the late class. And, I don't know how long they continued that. Then later, when they decided to have a Japanese language school at Hanapepe, I think Mr. Inouye was hired. And they built a Japanese language school where the present Salvation Army---one of the buildings is the old Japanese language school.

GG: And so, in the mean time, was the one that you folks were at Hanapepe just left empty?

MO: Just left empty. And this morning, Mrs. Wakasa said that her father is the Hironaga, I think...leased the building. And the Filipinos leased the building from him.

GG: Where were you going to school, at the time of the strike?

MO: Oh, that was Waimea; Grammar School, I think it was called, at the time.

GG: And this was up on the hill, is that where....

MO: Yes. Well, where the intermediate and high school is located. The buildings, then, were across from the Waimea Hospital.

GG: And then, before the Hanapepe incident, the strike was already going on. As a youngster, you must have been in what grade, at that time?

MO: Let's see, about the fifth grade, I think.

GG: You were nine, we figured out, right?

MO: Ten.

GG: Okay. Had you heard anything about the strike going on, before you heard about Hanapepe?

MO: I don't remember, because we were not that...well, for one thing, I guess we were just too busy with our own school work and things of that sort, that we hadn't paid much attention.

But then, all of a sudden, we began hearing about special police being hired. In those days, most of the policemen were Hawaiian,
pure Hawaiians. They used to ride horses. Well, for one thing, you know, since that was their mode of transportation, they had to get men who could ride. Not many Japanese and that kind of people ride horses. So, we heard (from classmates and neighbor children) that they were getting special police.

Then, all of a sudden was this incident. I think we must have gone down from school to the courthouse, during recess—either short recess or lunch recess—to see what was going on. I remember looking up—the courthouse is down below—looking up toward the community hall, and the double door that they have at the lower end of the hall was open and these legs were dangling down. They just brought the corpses from Hanapepe, throwing them there, because there wasn't enough room in the jailhouse, I guess.

GG: Was this the day that it had happened, or was this the day after it happened, or do you know?

MO: I think it's the day that it happened.

GG: And do you have any idea, if you think it was short recess, what time might that have been?

MO: Well, short recess would be about between 9:30 and 10:00, I would think.

GG: And then, how—as young children, were you allowed at short recess, to go down the hill to see?

MO: Well, I really don't remember the details, exactly when, but it seemed like it was during the morning time. But it may well have been in the afternoon—after school—that we all trailed down the road that goes down toward where the Big Save Market is now, see. And we were standing close—well, that was old Hofgaard Store—and looking. We were afraid to go right to the courthouse, so we watched everything from this side, from the Big Save side of the road.

GG: Do you remember more of what you saw? Were the corpses on a truck, or where....

MO: No. I remember seeing the legs dangling from the community hall, from the door. It may be that—see, I think that, as we walked home, which is on the Kekaha side, that's when we saw the legs dangling, actually. I heard that one of the—I think it was a classmate or one of the schoolmates, anyway—the father died, because he was a special police and he was one of the victims.

GG: Do you remember the name?

MO: No, I don't remember the name. Of course, I don't know exactly how many were killed, but it seemed to us that it was quite a battle.
And people used to describe how they saw the police shooting down at them, and the Filipinos had been spending a long time preparing for the incident by sharpening their cane knives, and things of that sort, as their weapons.

GG: Do you remember who you heard these things from?

MO: I think it was mostly from other children.

GG: Did you have Filipino classmates at school with you, too?

MO: Yes, I remember I had...not very many, you know, at that time. There were just about two or three. But I had Filipino classmates who came from Pakala. Now, they call it Makaweli. And these were the gentle type Filipinos, not the kind that get angry very quickly. One is now living at Kapaa, and I get to see her once in a while.

GG: Did you live in like a Japanese camp, or did you live at the Japanese language school in Waimea?

MO: At the language school. We had the living quarters in the same building--only separated by a wall--as the classroom. It was--at the entrance to the Japanese camp, for the Waimea Sugar Mill. No, I take that back; I think there were about three families at the beginning of the camp with Japanese families. Then, there was a Filipino family. That was a mixed up sort of a family. Either Filipino or Filipino with a Portuguese or Puerto Rican wife. Because they baked bread with that brick oven, further in the camp. Then, the Filipino camp was toward the beach side. Uh huh.

GG: Do you remember, when you walked down and actually saw the bodies at the courthouse, were you with a friend, or friends, at that time?

MO: Yes, we were quite a number of us walking together. But I don't remember.

GG: Well, do you remember what you felt at the time, or what you folks' reaction was, seeing that?

MO: Well, we thought what an awful thing that so many should be killed. Of course, we didn't know what it was all about, and we just kept wondering what caused such a thing to happen.

GG: Did you go home and talk about it with your mother or your father at all?

MO: I think we did, because we generally, at dinner time, would talk about everything that we saw and heard. But I don't remember how they reacted.
GG: What about, say, the next day at school; did your teachers say anything about it, or did children talk about it any further?

MO: The teachers didn't say anything. Well, we kept talking about it for a long time, I'm sure. But the teachers didn't encourage any discussion of that sort, at that time.

GG: Do you remember of any community reaction, or maybe if you went into a store, did you hear people talking about it in the stores, too?

MO: Well, you know, we didn't have a chance to go to stores that frequently. You know, if we had a chance to get into town once in two weeks, or so, then. By that time, things quieted down, I think. We were so busy, actually, at home; we had to hand wash all our clothes and iron them. Saturday was wash day and Sunday was ironing day, and we were just kept busy.

GG: Okay, how did you first hear the news about the shooting?

MO: That was in school, and somebody must have come and told the---I guess the grapevine just worked very fast.

GG: Okay, I wondered, do you think that the Filipinos gained anything, by their strike?

MO: Actually, I don't know anything, what happened before and after. It was just that memory of that tragic thing that just shook us, because nothing like that had ever happened before and after.

GG: Do you recall if your family was asked to help support the strike in any way; through donations or by giving food to the strikers?

MO: I don't remember.

GG: Did you---I can't remember the date, but prior to the Hanapepe incident, workers from Hanapepe had marched to Waimea, the strikers. Do you remember anything about that?

MO: I hadn't heard anything about it.

GG: Could you tell me a little bit more; you say you were kept busy all the time. Can you tell me a little bit about what your typical day was like?

MO: Well, get up before my mother. And fix breakfast, make cocoa for the kids and...let's see, what else did we have.

GG: Was that your job, to wake up before she did?

MO: Yes, uh huh.

GG: How did you wake up in the morning?
MO: Well, she'd yell, I think. And I got up and went to the kitchen and got breakfast ready for her. Well, she usually had a child to take care of, you see. She was nursing...what was this now... 1924. She just had the second youngest of my brothers. [Fifth child]

GG: You were the oldest of all the children?

MO: Yes, uh huh. And he was born July 2, so you see, she had a baby, and I had to get up ahead and get breakfast ready, and get the children off to school.

GG: What kinds of things would you have for breakfast?

MO: Well, papaya, if we had papaya. Or bananas. Of course, during the summer, we had mangos, because we had lot of mango trees in the yard. And then, cocoa and either crackers or bread, I think. I remember, at one time, my father learned to make this...okayu, that the people of Yamaguchi—they call it chagai, you know, from the minister next door, who had learned it from somebody else. And so, he was so enthusiastic, he used to cook it outdoors, in the big Japanese rice pot. And after he got that ready, he would take the hot coals and put them into like a tray that he fashioned with... well, the Japanese used to call it buriki. But it's a metal, and put it on top of the frying pan, that you made pancakes with. So the pancakes rose nice and high. And he'd give them to us for breakfast, and what's left over, we'd have for our snack after we come back from school. So, if he made chagai, we had chagai and pancakes for breakfast, and chagai and pancakes for our snack (and pickled vegetables or shio kombu to eat with the chagai).

GG: Did you folks take lunch to school, or what did you do?

MO: We bought school lunch. And I remember, we used to have—well, one of the things I remember, was macaroni and cheese; I love that. And, oh, they would have some kind of—oh, for dessert, we had chocolate pudding, I think that was my favorite. But, in those days, lunch used to cost only 5 cents, I think. When I went to school at the Hanapepe and Elele School—oh, I don't remember so well at Elele. But at Hanapepe, there was no school cafeteria so we used to go to this Chinese store and buy doughnut; sugar doughnut, or else this loaf of bread that's cut lengthwise and butter on one side and guava jelly on the other side. That would be our lunch.

GG: How much did you have to pay for that?

MO: A nickel. I think, uh huh. They had these small loaves, you know.

GG: Then, it was at Waimea, though, they had a cafeteria?

MO: Yes, they had a cafeteria.
GG: Was it mostly haole style food, or did they take into consideration...

MO: Only haole style food. It's a long time before the Chinese and Japanese style foods were included there.

GG: What did you folks do for recreation, or for fun?

MO: Well, we had a lot of fun. We made our own games. For example, while we were waiting for the---if we were in the older group of Japanese language school classes, and we had to wait for the early class, then we'd play kick tin, and....

GG: How did you play that?

MO: Well, you kicked the can, and the person or persons--we probably in teams--and they'd have to go get the can and bring it back where it was kicked from. In the mean time, everybody hides. Then, it's the person who brought the can back, to go and look for the people who had hidden, you see. Then, if a member of that opposite group comes back and takes the can without the other team becoming aware of it, then you had the point. Something like that. Anyway, we used to enjoy those games quite a bit.

Then, we used to draw blocks on the ground and have one person watching each line, and the opposing team will try to go through all the blocks and then come back. It's a victory for the team that can make through safely, going through and then coming back to the starting point. But then, it wasn't that easy to go through, and it was a lot of challenging of....using psychology and all of that, to try to distract the person's attention, the teamwork, and all of that. I think it was---you know, lot of that kind of games would be much better than these ready-made games that children have these days. So expensive and they get tired of it in no time flat.

GG: Right. What did you call the game with the blocks, do you remember that?

MO: I don't remember, but we sure had a lot of fun.

GG: And then, did you go to Japanese school after regular school?

MO: That's right.

GG: And then, you'd have to wait sometimes, for the later session if you were older?

MO: Yes, yes. Usually, an hour.

GG: What kind of household chores were you expected to do?
MO: Well, first thing, we had to sweep and mop the porch. And, let's see....

GG: Did you have regular brooms that you got at the store?

MO: Yes, uh huh. And the mops were big and heavy. In the afternoon, had to get the—one of the boys usually got the hot water ready for the bath, furo. And I would have to cook the rice and get the vegetables cleaned, ready for cooking. But since my mother kept pushing her job to me, all the time, I decided I wasn't going to learn to cook, to flavor, to season the food. And so, I never became a very good cook, because I was protesting against all the work that was being piled up on me. The dishwashing was done by all the children; as each one grew up, boys or girls, each had a chance to wash the dishes or wipe the dishes. Usually, one washed and one wiped.

GG: You had the kitchen inside, by that time?

MO: Well, our kitchen was sort of a separate place. There was a connecting lanai. Later, the lanai was extended so that it was like an extra opened room there, in between the kitchen and the living room.

GG: What kind of stove did you use?

MO: Oh, a kerosene stove. The rice was cooked with a wood stove, outside.

GG: Did you celebrate special holidays together, in any kind of way?

MO: Oh yes, we had some grand holidays. Of course, New Year's was a big event. I didn't enjoy too much, because that meant a lot of work for me. Serving the sake to the people who came to the New Year's ceremony. You know, they did all of this—what they do at the Japanese Consulate now. They were Japanese nationals, so they had this regular ceremony with the portrait of the emperor, and the banzais for the emperor, and so on. After the New Year's ceremony was finished, my mother would serve sake, and she would have some of the—well, she used to make namasu, with daikon and carrots. So it was pretty, you know, that red of the carrot and the white of the daikon. I wonder if she put some fish; she wrapped the vegetables around the fish. Anyway, they were sort of bite sized. And one of the men, Mr. Kagawa, used to say that he just looked forward to her namasu for New Year's. And, I remember one year, I was so overcome with the fumes that I was quite drunk, just serving them the sake.

I remember when Emperor Hirohito became the emperor. There was a big celebration, and it went right through the night.

(Laughs) My father was a great one for putting on a show, you know. Some of the things that I remember, I keep wondering how he
managed. Because at Hanapepe, he put on a musical. And he must have had somebody from Japan to train the youngsters. This was the one of Momotaro. And, they were all in costume; we have a photograph taken of that, of all the people who took part in there. And the Kumabe twins, who are retired school teachers, they were part of it; and Mrs. Hirano. Well, some of the people have already passed away, but that was a big event.

Then, coming back to Emperor Hirohito’s crowning—as you might call it, I guess—we had a night thing, and an early morning ceremony. And the fires were—they burned the kiawe wood in these metal containers, that remind me of the TV samurai pictures now. You know, where they have the—when the battles are going on and you have these things to light up the camps. Well, we had that in the Japanese School yard, to light up the yard for the people to attend the services. It was some big thing. We had to learn special songs, and all kinds of things for that.

GG: Did your family do mochi rice pounding too?

MO: Yes, yes. We had enough boys to pound the mochi, and it was quite a job.

GG: Did you do that just once a year?

MO: We did it just once a year. But, you know, later on; as they had more time, then some people would have them made—you see, usually, we do it at the end of the year, so that we’d have the last Sunday weekend of December, so that we have the mochi for New Year’s. Then, some families had them for the Chinese New Year’s, because that’s New Year by the lunar calendar. Then, on March 3, for the Girls’ Day, they would have mochi, too. And then, for the Boys’ Day, May 5, they would. Usually, those are the days that they made mochi for.

GG: Did you folks in Waimea celebrate Girls’ Day and Boys’ Day, with special kinds of celebration?

MO: Well, not very big, but we did do it in a small family manner. Well, in those days, we didn’t have means, and we just....the stores didn’t go in for all these dolls and things of that sort. So we just had a little special dish, or something of that sort, to mark the day.

GG: Do you have any idea what your father’s salary was, or how he paid when he was Japanese school teacher?

MO: I think when he moved to Waimea, he was given $60 a month. And I don’t know how—I guess half of that for my mother (for combined services). But, you see, the house, housing was free, was part of that. My father used to go—well, he was like a Catholic father, you know. Whenever there was a family problem, he would be the one
go to and patch up the difference. The generation gap was there, too. I remember one particular family, where the oldest son couldn't get along with his bride from Japan; and my father had to go and talk to the family, to the parents, to the son, to the wife. And finally, it ended in divorce, and the son married a girl from Hawaii--born in Hawaii. And he's quite happy with her yet. I guess the first wife who came from Japan went to Honolulu and found another husband. But anyway, my father used to go; he was hardly home. And I used to ask him sometimes, "Why don't you spend some more time at home?"

And he said, "Well, you know, I don't know how long I'm going to live; I may die much sooner than I would like to. And the more I can help other people, some people may remember and help my children, after I'm gone. So, don't feel too bad about it."

GG: Did he die young?

MO: No, he lived to age 80; and I think part of the reason was that he was interned during the war. Yes, the very first day. All the people who had anything to do with the Consulate were interned. And while he was interned, of course, he couldn't drink as much liquor as he would like to; they were rationed, I guess. And if he had been in Hawaii, during the war, people used to line up to buy liquor and give to people who drank, even if they didn't drink. Same way with tobacco, I guess. But then, he would have so much to drink, that he would have died young. But I think the fact that he was in internment camp, that prolonged his life.

GG: Where was he interned?

MO: All over. He was at Fort Sill. He said thunderstorms were something, that he never ever experienced before, just like the world was splitting into two. Then, he went to someplace in, way south Mississippi; somewhere way down south. Then, he went to Missoula, Montana; and then, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Santa Fe was the last place. But of all the places, he said he liked Missoula the best. I guess they had more freedom there.

(During his internment, I was a teacher at Hilo Intermediate School. A brother and sister were at the University supporting themselves and part of them worked at Mana. The youngest son was in high school).

GG: Was his salary, when he was a Japanese School teacher, was that paid by the plantation?

MO: No, he was paid through the Japanese Association at Waimea. All the Japanese schools were independent Japanese schools, and the parents who sent their children to school paid tuition for each child.
GG: Did the Japanese community in Waimea bring him over specially, from Japan?

MO: No, no. From Hanapepe.

GG: Right, but when he first came from Japan, had Hawaii requested that he come?

MO: I suppose the Hanapepe Japanese Association made a request and he...at Waimea, you see, the Japanese school was being conducted by the church, the Buddhist churches. And there was this conflict between the Higashi Hongwanji and Nishi Hongwanji. It was started, I think, by the Higashi Hongwanji. But then, the Nishi Hongwanji minister wanted to take over, or something; there was some kind of a conflict, and that's the reason why they wanted to make it separate from the church. And that's when my father was transferred over to Waimea.

GG: The property and the school itself, did that belong to the Japanese community?

MO: Yes.

GG: The plantation didn't donate the land?

MO: No, it was completely Japanese community. And then, later, when they built another, a new school, closer to the public school----I don't know the details of that; whether the plantation exchanged or they gave them the land in exchange for the old place, because I know the plantation used that old Japanese school. It's still using it for their work.

GG: Okay, is there anything else that you remember, that we haven't talked about, that you think we should?

MO: Well, you see, we didn't have the radio and the TV. And the one big thing that I remember from my---well, when we were in the seventh, eighth grade, that we looked forward to, was to go to watch baseball. And usually, the baseball games are played at Kekaha. And so, we used to walk all the way from Waimea, to go to Kekaha, to watch those baseball games.

GG: How far is that?

MO: Is it three miles, or four miles? I'm not sure. But we used to walk to watch the baseball games, and that was something that we looked forward to.

And, you know, one Easter, I remember--I must have been about 10 or 11. No, about 9 or 10, because my sister was still a baby, and I had to wheel her in a buggy. And I got the brother just older than she, my two brothers and another neighbor's boy, and my sister;
all ready, all dressed up. And I was going to walk with them to Kekaha, to attend the Easter service. But luckily, just as we had started out towards Kekaha, Mr. Kanzaki—who owned the Waimea Meat Market and Waimea Hotel—came by in his van, and picked us up. And we had a good ride to Kekaha. And at that sunrise service, I remember seeing, for the first time, Dr. Harada, who used to teach Japanese History at the University of Hawaii. And his wife and daughter. And I watched the daughter and thought how beautiful she was, little dreaming that I would see them at the University, later on. So, that was quite a memorable trip to Kekaha, that Easter Sunday.

GG: And did you walk back from Kekaha?

MO: No, I think I had a ride, because I don't remember walking home. But, you know, I don't know how many children would take the trouble of getting three other individuals all prepared for this trip and take the responsibility...

GG: And so far.

MO: Yeah. But, at Hanapepe, my mother used to take the second brother to Eleele School. Of course, my brother Hisashi, and I would be at school already. And after we got finished with school, then I would bring back my brother Hisashi and Tamotsu. Well, it happened that we came back in 1921, and they were still raising these victory gardens. And Mr. Brodie, the principal at Eleele School, had made this garden area in Hanapepe, and anyone who wanted was given a bed (plot about 2-1/2' x 6') of garden to plant and attend. And oh, it was so---I was just wishing for a piece of ground to work on. And I finally got a garden patch. But, in those days, there wasn't any seed to be bought at the stores; you had to get it from friends. And I had a friend who lived up in the valley, and I decided that I was going there, on my way home from school, and ask for some seeds. Well, in order to do that, I decided to go across the swinging bridge—near the old Japanese Christian church in Hanapepe—and take the shortcut. Then, I wouldn't take so long in going home, because I had to have the rice cooked, by the time my mother got home.

So, what did I do? I took the older one across the bridge, telling the younger one to wait, "and I'll come back for you." But when I finished taking the older one across and turned around, here was this young one, coming on the bridge. I was so frightened, I ran without realizing that the more I ran, the more the bridge would swing. And I used to have nightmares, thinking, what if that brother had fallen into the river, what would I have done. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, all in cold sweat. I would think, gee---of course, I was not supposed to have done that. I never, ever told my mother what I had done.

GG: Neither of the brothers told, either?
MO: No, nobody said anything. But if only my parents knew what had transpired then. (Laughs)

GG: So, did you get your seed, then?

MO: I don't remember about that. The scare got me so upset, that all I remember is that vision of that swinging bridge.

GG: Is that bridge gone now?

MO: It's still there. And, you know, the supporting wires are so far apart, that a person could easily go through and fall into the river...

END OF INTERVIEW