Okinawa: The Old Days

I was born in the 34th year of Meiji (1901). My birthplace was Okinawa—Shimajiri-gun (district), Kochinda-son (village), aza (village section) Yonagusuku.

There were four children in my family. I had a younger sister and two older brothers. I was the third child. My father Komata Chinen, and my mother were poor farmers. Father said his father had also been a farmer. But grandfather died before I was born, so I never knew him.

I don't remember much about the old days. I was just a kid then. I was 13 years and 10 months old when I came to Hawaii.

We were a poor family. We couldn't eat well in Okinawa. My parents grew sugarcane and potatoes. We had no rice to eat. That's why my dad said he came to Hawaii.

When I was a child of about 11, I helped with the farming. I cut grass for the water buffalo and fed it.

As a youngster I was a rascal and always got into fights. I went to Kochinda Elementary School for six years, and after graduating I then entered what's called kōtō-gakkō (middle school) for about nine months. I studied the usual subjects—arithmetic, penmanship, history. My favorite subject was writing compositions. I enjoyed doing it by myself. I was always tops at that. I couldn't write characters, though; I was weakest at that.

We always used standard Japanese in writing compositions. The textbooks were also written in standard Japanese. But I spoke Okinawan when I went home. Papa and Mama never went to school because there weren't any during their time. Now, I can't speak entirely in Okinawan. In fact when I went back to Okinawa in 1955, a group of old people greeted me. I thought that since they were old, I'd speak to them in Okinawan. But when I tried, I found I couldn't. So I said, "I'm sorry, but please let me speak in Japanese." I couldn't even say a simple "Thank you" in Okinawan.

Based on interviews by Michiko Kodama, ESOHP Researcher/Interviewer. Translated by Sharon Shimazu. Edited by Karleen Chinen.
I was an above-average student in school. I was a rascal and liked to
cfight, but I was not below average. From the first year of *junjō* (lower ele-
mentary school) until the sixth year, I received a prize yearly. We got things
like tablets, pencils. In Japan, at the graduation ceremony, they would give
prizes to about ten students who did well. I was among them.

However, I wasn't very ambitious when I was young. I was too simple-
minded at the time to think about what I wanted to be when I grew up. I
just obeyed my father.

My father came to Hawaii in 1906—the 39th year of Meiji. We were so
poor that there was hardly anything to eat. Father heard that Hawaii was a
good place to earn money.

When father came here, he did sugarcane fieldwork, such as *kachi kane*
(cutting cane), *hapai-kō* (loading cane)—that kind of work.

I heard he first worked on a Lahaina plantation. From there, he went to
Olau Plantation on Hawaii. He intended to return to Okinawa from Olau
Plantation, but I guess he thought Hawaii was a good place so he stayed.

While he was here, he sent letters and money back to us in Okinawa. I
can't remember everything he wrote in the letters, but I do recall my mother
saying he had written, "Attend to your studies." It seemed we were able to
live quite well with the money father sent back to us in Okinawa. We were
also able to pay off an old debt. Because of this financial leeway, father was
able to send for my two older brothers. I was the only son left in Okinawa.

When father left for Hawaii that first time, I never really thought about
his being away from the family. I was still a kid and everybody was saying
that Hawaii was such a nice place. All I knew was that he couldn't take me to
Hawaii with him. It never occurred to me at that time to consider what my
mother or sister would do if I was gone.

The other people in Kochinda-son thought it was good for father to go
to Hawaii. About 16 of father's friends also went to Hawaii.

I was happy when father said he was bringing me to Hawaii. He had
been making money and sending a lot back, so I thought Hawaii was a good
place. Moreover, I believed in him and happily went along. I intended to
make money in Hawaii and then return to Okinawa in four or five years.

Father said Hawaii was peaceful, the weather was good, and the work
was easier than work in Okinawa. He didn't say much about what kind of
work he did, so I really didn't know what it would be like. I felt sad about
leaving Okinawa. Mama and sister were left behind, and in a way, I felt I'd
made a mistake. I didn't want to leave and I felt sad. Mama also felt sad
about my leaving. At first she wanted me to stay in Okinawa. But, since my
two older brothers went to Hawaii before me, it didn't seem right to make
me stay back and lead a poor life, so she had me go.

My friends were kids. When they heard about my leaving, they just
said, "Well, go and come back."

*On the Boat, Bound for Hawaii*

I didn't make many preparations for my trip to Hawaii. Since I was still
a child, I just came with a kimono stuffed in a willow trunk. I didn't worry
about anything because I was with dad. He had money that he brought from Hawaii.

We took a boat, the Koun-maru, from Naha to Kobe. In Kobe, we had to take a medical exam. We left Kobe on the Chou-maru and arrived in Yokohama where we spent two days before coming to Hawaii.

There were other children on the boat, so we played rowdily on the deck and quarreled. We played janken-po ("scissors-paper-rock" game), and tumbled around. Three kids from Niigata Prefecture and three from Okinawa were thrown together. We Okinawans spoke only Okinawan, so they must have thought we weren’t Japanese. I heard them saying in Japanese, “I wonder where those guys come from.” I understood them because I had studied Japanese. One of the boys said “Maybe they’re Korean.” I got angry at him for calling us Koreans so I slapped him. Back in the boat room, we talked to our fathers, and the fathers talked it over. The boy’s father admitted that his son was wrong to call us Koreans and apologized to me. It was interesting. That was my first real contact with Naichi (Japanese from the main islands of Japan).

The sleeping quarters and the food on the boat were good. There was nothing to complain about. Children—they don’t know. Besides, I was with my father so I wasn’t worried about anything.

From Olaa to Wailuku

When we finally arrived in Hawaii, there were no jobs, so we went to Olaa. The economy was down, so my older brothers had moved to Wailuku, Maui. We had sent a letter to my brothers, but before they could acknowledge it, we had left Okinawa.

My uncle, who was in Olaa, met us on our arrival and said, "Oh, they went to Maui." Dad had planned to return to work in Olaa, but the economy was so bad and there were hardly any jobs. My father worked at Olaa for about two weeks and wrote to my brothers, but they preferred to stay on Maui.

When I first arrived in Olaa, there were no friends to play with. I couldn’t remember being that lonely before. The work itself wasn’t so hard; it was the loneliness that was painful. After I made some friends, though, it wasn’t so bad.

From Olaa, we went to Wailuku. There, I worked from 1914 to 1916 as a sugar plantation worker. I did hō hana—hoe work—cane cutting, and kompang (contract cane cultivating) work.

I started out with a boy bangō (assigned number). We worked ten hours a day. I had a small body, so I was still a boy bangō. There was also a wahine bangō for women. For one day, we got 35 cents.

My status changed from boy bangō when I became 16. I started doing kompang work from then. A man from the company would come by and ask how much work we wanted. Kompang work was easier and we got to work with our friends.

For others, the average pay was 75 cents, but those who did kompang work got 65 cents per day. However, once every two years when the cane got
big and healthy and there was a large harvest, a lot of bonus money would come in. I made friends doing kompang work. It was very good. I was glad that I'd come to Hawaii.

One thing I had to do was hanawai (water the cane). We had a lot of rain in Okinawa. But, unlike Okinawa, Hawaii didn't rain as much. So, we dug furrows, planted the sugarcane in them, then ran the water through each furrow. When that was done, we'd stop the water and go on to the lower furrows and run the water. When those furrows were full, we'd go to the succeeding lower furrows, and on down the line. When the cane grew larger, we would peel off the outer leaves called "'opala" (rubbish). The cane stalk was also used as planting material for new sugarcane.

When I first came from Okinawa, the hardest thing for me at work was hāpai-kō (loading cane). I had a small body. When they didn't have enough people, they'd say, "You, go!" so I had to do it. That was the hardest. Those who were stronger would run away and I would be left to do it. That was painful.

The easiest work to get used to was hō hana—hoe work. I used to do that in Okinawa too, so that was okay.

But I didn't just work. During my boy bangó days, I got up early in the morning, went to work, came home. Around that time, there already were quite a few Okinawans, and I took sumō lessons with them, played tug-of-war, all kinds of things.

I also joined a ten-dollar tanomoshi (mutual finance association). We each put in ten dollars a month. I made a profit.

But, I never knew what spending money was. I was poor and I had to send money back to Okinawa.

I also spent money on laundry, baths, and meals. I could eat for about $3.50 a month. My meals consisted of rice, mainly vegetables, and, about twice a week, meat. We were served by an o-gokku (big cook, chief cook).

In Wailuku, the first camp we lived in was Pihihana Camp. There were 11 houses in Pihihana Camp, so there were about 20 people, because at that time, most of them were single. Some of them were living two or three men to a house.

The buildings were made of wooden boards and were clean. Compared to modern houses, though, they were junk. The toilet and those kinds of things were not in the house. Everything was outside.

The houses that families lived in were different from the houses of single men. But in those days, there weren't very many families. After I came, there were a lot of marriages. About 12 men had sent for wives from Okinawa and settled in Pihihana Camp.

When we weren't working, we mainly attended to our own affairs. The wives were busy with their laundry and so forth, so we seldom got together for recreational activities.

I had both Okinawan and Japanese friends because I knew both languages. I knew Okinawan and, of course, I studied Japanese in school. So I associated with the Japanese. Once in a while, the dialects of people from
places like Kumamoto and Hiroshima prefectures would come out and I sometimes had difficulty understanding them. Nowadays, people from Kumamoto, Hiroshima and those surrounding areas study standard Japanese in school, so there’s no problem. But at that time, people spoke their own dialect. Anyway, I had a good relationship with the Japanese. We were all together in a small camp.

The relationship with our luna wasn’t very good. Sometimes he would make fun of the Japanese. He was pretty bad and he tormented us. I think he acted that way toward us mainly because we didn’t know Hawaiian nor English—that was the number one reason. Otherwise, work was work. The difference between work in Okinawa and work in Hawaii was that tools like the kuwa (Japanese hoe) and the hoe here were different.

As I think back, when I got to Wailuku after leaving Okinawa, I thought it wasn’t such a nice place. It was a hilly town with no transportation. I didn’t like it. After I got to Wailuku, I started going to night school to learn English. Mr. Satoshisuke Yasui of the Maui newspaper was the principal of the school. I learned the ABC at his place. At Vineyard Street in Maui, there was a Japanese Christian church—lao Congregational. After I learned the ABC I went there and studied under a haole (Caucasian) teacher. I’ve completely forgotten what I learned in English school besides the ABC. I’ve gotten old, so I can’t remember.

There were about 25 students in one class, and there were two classes. We met on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 6 to 9 p.m.

I didn’t understand English and I couldn’t talk to my luna, so that’s what I intended to learn first. My head was pupule (dense), so I had a hard time learning. I had to pay a monthly fee which in the beginning with Mr. Yasui, was about 50 cents. Everything was cheap in those days.

World War I broke out before I started my kompang work. At that time, there was talk that I could join the service and go to America when I returned. I wanted to enlist, but I was one year below the age requirement, so I couldn’t go.

From about 1916 to 1929, I did uke-kibi (sugarcane contracting). I worked with my father until he went back to Japan in 1918.

**Immigration Center Wedding**

In 1920, my wife came to Hawaii and I got married. Her name was Usa Kohatsu, and she was a year younger than me. In Okinawa, we had attended the same school, so we were like classmates.

My parents made the decision for us to marry. They sent me a letter after they had decided. She wasn’t a bad girl, so I said all right in the letter I sent back to them. I called her over soon after that. And then I went to the immigration office on Oahu to get her.

They had the people from Japan stand up. Then they asked me, “Which one is your wife?” and I pointed her out.

She was 18 when she arrived. It was only four years since I last saw her when I left Okinawa, so I recognized her right away.
We had the ceremony at the immigration office. At that time, the wedding ceremony was conducted in English, so I didn’t understand what was said, but we stood in front of the man and raised our hands. That was the wedding ceremony, they said.

That was all there was to the wedding ceremony, so we went home to Maui and had a celebration. The people at the camp had prepared a lot of good food and were waiting for us.

Weddings were a little different then. In the morning, you go down to meet the person at the boat, come back, and have a gathering of guests, just like modern weddings. The party wasn’t as fancy as they are now, and even the gochisō (feast) for the celebration was mainly tōfu (bean curd). That’s how we used to celebrate before.

Later, my wife worked too, until she got pregnant. The uke-kibi workers were mostly the kompang people. The ladies usually took turns to do the cooking for the men.

My wife worked hard. She never said much about how she felt about her life in Hawaii. It was only after she died that I saw what she’d written in a journal she kept. She didn’t say a word about her troubles. She was very good to me.

**Becoming a Chūmon-tori**

In 1929, I left my uke-kibi job in Wailuku to work at Onishi Shōkai (store), where the pay was better. Mr. Kochi who worked there helped me get the job. He came over to take orders for some goods and encouraged me to work there. He said the pay was good.

I worked at Kahului’s Onishi Shōkai as a chūmon-tori (order taker) from 1929 to 1934. I received a cap and had to ask customers, “What would you like to order?” I took the orders and then the next day, I would deliver the merchandise.

Chūmon-tori work was pretty interesting. I got to talk with the customers about all kinds of things while taking their orders. I would ask, “How was it today—had fun?” That kind of thing. The hardest thing about the work was collecting payments because this was during the depression.

Generally speaking, plantation payday period was usually when I made my collection. So, during the two or three-day period, I would pass out the bills and collect the money before work started in the morning. Most of the homes were easy to collect from. I made the rounds every day, so everybody was good to me.

I mentioned earlier that the hardest thing about chūmon-tori work was collection time because everybody was poor. Balancing the payments was hard. For example, a person who did kompang work, may have bought $50 worth of goods and paid $25; he would wait for a year until after the kompang money came in to pay the balance.

But I never experienced a time when I received nothing. There were times when goods were sold out and we couldn’t do anything but wait.
Once in a while we had to garnishee, too. If I thought the balance was hopeless, even at $200 or $300, I’d go ahead and garnishee it.

Besides Onishi Shōkai, there was a plantation store. Some people say the plantation store was cheaper. But since I was employed at the Onishi Shōkai we didn’t buy there.

In those days, people ordered things like konbu (seaweed), shōyu (soy sauce), miso (soybean paste). They didn’t eat that much meat because they didn’t have much money.

There were probably tricks to taking orders, but I wasn’t that good at it. There were people who could sell $1,400 to $1,500 worth of goods in a month’s time. There were times when I sold about $1,400 to $1,500, but I wasn’t consistent the way the really skillful people were.

Onishi Shōkai employed both Japanese and Okinawan workers. When I was there, there were three Okinawans and about seven Naichi. The Okinawans were Mr. Kochi, Kamejo Higa, and myself.

Mr. Kochi would go to the Okinawan families. At Waikapu Camp, I went to all the houses—the Japanese homes as well as the Okinawan homes.

The relationship between the Japanese and the Okinawans around that time was getting better; there wasn’t much discrimination. Personally, I was discriminated against when I first came. The Naichi used to say bad things like, Okinawa-kenjin buta kaukau ("Okinawans eat pigs" or "Okinawans—pig slop") about us.

But, from 1929 to 1934, around that time, those incidents became less frequent. The situation improved quite a bit. The Japanese and the Okinawans came to realize that they were all fellow Japanese. Then there wasn’t much discrimination.

In those days, we were living in Onishi Camp. If you go towards Paia, there’s a kyōshinkai (fairgrounds). Onishi Camp was near there, on the right-hand side. There were about seven houses in the camp. The people who lived there were all chūmon-tori.

The houses weren’t fancy, but they were good buildings. Of course, the toilet was outside. They still had outdoor toilets.

Everybody at Onishi Camp got along well with each other. Every year for New Year’s, we’d get together to make mochi (pounded rice cakes). The Onishi Shōkai boss had a nice house behind the store, but they never associated socially with their employees.

When Emperor Taishō became emperor, the Japanese and Okinawans from Kahului and Wailuku got together and celebrated with samurai dances. It was really festive. And then, I forget what year, but people said that Okinawan bon (Lantern Festival) dance was very interesting so Wailuku and Kahului got together and staged a lively bon dance in Kahului.

We also had plays and movies to go to. Until around 1934, there weren’t any Okinawan plays. I went to the Japanese plays when they had them because I could understand Japanese. They were held in a theater in Wailuku, at Stable Camp.
We also saw movies at the Nippon Kan on Vineyard Street in Wailuku. It had nothing but Japanese films. It’s hard to say which was the most popular movie because all the movies were interesting. But, I guess it was Chu-shingura, which was about revenge. That was the most interesting. They had live narrators who provided words for the silent movies.

I worked as a chumon-tori at Onishi Shōkai until 1934 when I moved with my brothers to Molokai. They said it was easy to make money there and there was more than enough work available. So, I went.

**A Good Place to Live**

When I first got to Molokai, I thought, “This is a lonely place.” But then I started going fishing and playing go (Japanese checkers) and decided that it was a good place. But, in the beginning, it seemed like the sticks.

At first, I did farming work, common labor. I made 25 cents an hour, and worked eight hours a day. Besides planting pineapple, I picked pineapple. I put them in a bag and shouldered them. That was real tiring work!

At that time, we still had to take the ‘ōpala off the pineapple pulapula (sproutings). I was weak-kneed, so I was the worst person at planting.

Everyone who picked pineapple was contracted. On an average day, I’d get about $2.25 to $2.50. I’d take my children with me, and I’d pick the pineapples and cut off the tops. The children were a big help. They would put them into boxes.

This was only during the pineapple season. It was vacation for them then and people were needed at the plantation, so we took along the children. They were happy about it, excited, and made lots of noise.

The luna was always around to check the work—were the tops cut off adequately, were the boxes packed to the maximum. He checked up on those things.

From around that time, some of the lunas were Japanese. My luna’s name was Mr. Okushima. He was a good person. He taught me all kinds of things, like go.

During those first three years on Molokai I sent back as much money as I could because at that time, my father was poor. So, in the meantime, I couldn’t really educate my children.

The Molokai camp we lived in was called Kualapuu Camp. It was below Kalaupapa. It was a big camp, it even had a theater. There were about 50 houses.

At first most of the people were Japanese. Then, from 1946, a big load of Filipinos came in. Generally, it was easier to live on Molokai than Maui. That was because foreigners and Japanese alike were regarded as family. If you stood in the street and said, “Hi!” everybody would wave. Someone would come by in a car and ask, “Where are you going? Need a ride?” It was like that. Neither Maui nor the other islands were like that. It was a very good place to live. It wasn’t a “gaijin” (foreigner), or a “kanaka” (Hawaiian), or a “Japanese.” No matter who it was, we got along well. “Hello, hello,” we’d say.
When I retired, there were 147 Okinawan people on the island. At the high point, there must have been about 500.

In 1937, I became a tractor operator. A Filipino man had been doing it, but he decided to change jobs. "You want to do it?" I was asked.

"Oh, I'll give it a try," I said. A man by the name of Nagano taught me how to drive.

The monthly salary was good. The standard was 25 cents, so, I guess I got about 30 cents an hour, about five cents above the standard wage. The tractor job was year-round, eight hours a day.

Once in a while, we worked 10, 12 hours, even. The war started in December of 1941. From New Year's of 1942, we worked 12 hours a day for a whole year.

In the beginning, I was happy to work overtime, but no matter how long we worked, they only paid us $200 a month. And, because it was wartime, we were told we couldn't miss a day of work. They gave out cards on which would be marked whether you came or were absent. Those who came every day would get a prize, they said. Since I had a card, even if it was painful, I would show up for work. It's a good thing I did.

We were told that the plantation was keeping our overtime pay for us. Because we were citizens of Japan, we assumed we weren't going to get it. But in 1955, to my surprise I was told to come and get it. Just the overtime pay alone was $1,300. "This is a good chance. Let's go to Japan," I said, and in 1955 my wife and I went. If it wasn't for that money, we couldn't have gone to Japan.

During wartime, we knew we'd be in trouble if the Japanese planes came to the pineapple fields, so we dug ditches for air raid shelters. I did that ditch-digging work for a year.

The plantation boss treated everyone well. During the war, I was investigated three or four times by the military. We had a kenjinkai (prefectural club), and they wanted to know what the members did when we got together. But I hadn't done anything wrong, so nothing happened.

Quite a few others were also investigated. There were four teachers who were plucked out and sent to America. Mr. Arakaki, our kenjinkai chairman, and others were also investigated.

Even though we were Japanese, our company boss took care of us and protected us because we were his employees. That's probably why we weren't deported.

During the war, a lot of soldiers came to Molokai. I couldn't enter their area, but I saw them riding around in their cars at night. They used a blue light. It was already dark when we went home from work and they would stop us in the middle of the road and ask, "Where are you coming from? Where are you going?" And they'd point their guns at us. I didn't do anything bad, so nothing happened, but it was scary in the beginning.

During the war, I kept thinking, "What's going to happen?" It was painful. We had so many children, too. I was especially afraid that after the war, the Americans would kill all of the Japanese.
The American military was voicing its discontent with the Japanese, and I thought it was getting dangerous so I burnt all my old photographs and other Japanese things. Photographs of my family and pictures of the Emperor—I burned all of them. Just about everybody burned their things.

One Okinawan by the name of Nohara made a lot of money during the war. He originally ran a grocery store, but he didn’t want to do that, so he switched to raising pigs. Just at that time, the war broke out and a lot of Americans were coming to Molokai. He got their garbage and fed it to his pigs. He made a lot of money doing pig farming and continued it until 1965, I think. But he was the only one. Other Okinawans on Molokai didn’t have their own businesses.

After the war, I participated in the Okinawan relief program. Our kenjinkai sent pigs, school tablets and other things back to Okinawa. Some people participated individually.

There were about 140 members in our kenjinkai. It was called Kualapuu Kenjinkai, and it was already formed when I got there in 1934. There were people from Kualapuu and also from a place called Kipu Camp. We were combined. Maunaloa had their own kenjinkai. Once a year, we would get together and have a meeting—Kualapuu Kenjinkai and Maunaloa’s Okinawa Kenjinkai.

Our chairman was Mr. Arakaki. He was chairman straight through. I became secretary of our kenjinkai in 1934 when I moved to Molokai.

The Dole camp in Maunaloa also had a kenjinkai. I had no relationship with them, so I don’t know how many members they had, but maybe once a year we got together for sports meets. The officers of the respective groups would meet and say, “Let’s do it sometime.” They didn’t always select a special day to do it on. “Let’s do it on a day when the weather’s good.” That was usually in the summer, when the children had their vacation. There would be tug-of-war and sumo for children.

Since this was a kenjin (people from the same prefecture) picnic, only Okinawans participated. Schoolteachers, Japanese schoolteachers and important lunas were invited. “Come join us,” we’d tell them.

We had sports events and picnics, but the best thing we did was get the young people together and have them dance and put on plays. Onlookers would give donations and this money was used to make headstones for graves that nobody prayed at or paid homage at. Even now I think they still have that. The graveyard was way below Kaunakakai on Molokai, at Kamilo-loa. I think there are still some graves remaining. I have no reason, so I don’t visit that graveyard.

Our kenjinkai also held a New Year’s party and picnic every year. At the New Year’s party, we drank sake and danced. At the picnic, we had the kids do sumo wrestling and play tug-of-war. It was exciting and lively.

We had no kenjinkai during the war, but it became active again after the war was over.

Prior to the war, we had a tanomoshi, sponsored by the Kenjinkai. Tanomoshi was a gathering of people, where, if it was a ten-dollar tanomoshi,
each person would put in ten dollars a month, and interest was added on. If there were ten people, there would be $100 which we would lend.

I borrowed money from the tanomoshi a couple of times. In Okinawa, my father needed to pay off his debts so he needed money. And when my child had to go to the hospital, I didn’t go to a regular bank. I couldn’t go to the bank to borrow money so the tanomoshi was the main source.

After the war, the ILWU (International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union) came into being. Things improved on the Molokai plantation after the union came in. When we didn’t have the union, even though the cost of goods was rising, we couldn’t ask for a raise in salary. Once we had the union, it did the asking for us.

I felt that for us laborers, it was good to have a union. I was happy about it. I still feel the same way. Before the union was formed, housing and medical services were free. After the union was formed everyone had to pay for these but they raised our pay too.

We went on strike in 1946 and I walked with the others. We weren’t paid, but I didn’t think much about it because the union was with us. The plantation police and the government police were there. But, from that time on, because there was a union, nothing really bad happened. During the strike, we weren’t paid, so a private store lent me money. It was a good thing though, that we had the strike—our wages went up.

I worked until 1966, and then retired at the age of 65. I was content when I retired. I thought I had done good work, that things had gone well, and I was happy. On my last day at work, everybody gathered together and bid me goodbye. They said I’d done a good job and I told them in Japanese that I was leaving and said, ‘‘Thank you very much.’’

**Many Changes Over the Years**

As I think back, when my six children were young, the most important thing to me was giving them an education. I wanted to send them through school, but because I was poor, I couldn’t.

Of my six children, four graduated from high school, two had to leave school to work and help the family, and one went to college. When the children were young, I sent them to Japanese school. I didn’t have the head for teaching them Japanese language and culture. I talked about Okinawa, but I can’t dance or play the shamisen (string instrument), so there was nothing I could teach my children.

All in all, I’m happy I came to Hawaii. If I’d stayed in Okinawa, I’d probably have been poor the rest of my life—not that I’m rich now, but it was better living here than in Okinawa.

My wife worked so hard to raise the children. You know, when we moved to Molokai, besides being a mother, she did hōhana work and pineapple picking. This was only during the pineapple season, because the children were still small. My wife was so good to me. I’m happy and grateful.

I’ve seen many changes in the years I’ve been here. I think the thing that’s changed the most is the way children are raised. When we were
young, we learned about Japan and about America. But, nowadays they don't. They feel that forgetting all about Japan can't be helped. Parents think the same way, it seems. That's the biggest change, I'd say.

The Okinawan community here has also undergone many changes. From the Okinawan community have come businessmen, scholars, doctors, lawyers—famous people. That's a change. I think it's great. Hawaii is good.

I want my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to have an education and become lawyers, doctors—it doesn't matter what it is. As long as it is something exceptional, I would be satisfied.
UCHINANCHU
A History of Okinawans in Hawaii

CENTER FOR ORAL HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF HAWA'I AT MĀNOA

HAWA'I UNITED OKINAWA ASSOCIATION
Copyright © 1981 by Ethnic Studies Oral History Project
Ethnic Studies Program, University of Hawai'i

*First printing* 1981
*Second printing* 1984
*Third printing* 2009

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Ethnic Studies Oral History Project

Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii.

LOC 81-43434
ISBN 978-0-8248-0749-8

This book has been published with a grant from the Japan Foundation and with the assistance of the Center for Okinawan Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and the Center for Japanese Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Royalties from the sale of this book will be used to support further research and publication in Okinawan studies in Hawai'i.