CHOKAME AND TSURU HOKAMA

My parents told me that many long years ago, before Okinawa became a territory of Japan (1879), someone in our family was an envoy for the king of the Ryukyus. After he returned from his duty in China, he was awarded a small estate called Hokama-*mura* (Hokama Village). He then took the name Hokama; he adopted the name of the land. Before then, our family name was Shijima. Even now, I have relatives living in Naha, Okinawa, who are still called Shijima—my kinfolk. And there is still a small village called Hokama; but whether it is ours or another Hokama Village, I am not sure.

I was born in March, 1898, in Sashiki-*son,* Shimajiri-*gun,* Okinawa; the fifth of seven children. In my passport it says that I came from *shizoku* (warrior class). But that was a long time ago. When I was growing up in Okinawa, it made no difference in daily life.

We were poor. We owned a house but no property. Most of the people in the village were farmers; they grew sweet potatoes, various kinds of vegetables, and mainly sugarcane. Our farm was not big. We were just getting vegetables and potatoes from the land. My father was a farmer, but he also peddled fish to make ends meet.

He would wait until the fishermen returned with their catch, then he would buy fish directly from them. He used to go to Yonabaru to sell the fish—such a far distance—two or three *ri* (one *ri* = 2.440 miles). It brought him some money. There was no other way to gain extra money. My mother had many children. She was a housewife; she didn't have any other job.

My father went to Hawaii around 1905. Elder brother used to read his letters to us. Father didn't write any bad news. He just wrote that if you *shinbō shitara,* if you persevered, you'd make money. So, from his letters, I

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learned only that Hawaii meant a place to make money by hard work. Sometimes there were pictures of him in a western-style suit. I thought he looked nice, all dressed up. Of course, suits were often worn in Hawaii, and even poor material looks attractive in a western-style suit. But in those days, in Japan and especially in Okinawa, no one wore suits.

I don't mean to praise him, but he was extremely patient; he endured a lot. It was difficult to sustain himself, but he endured more steadfastly than others. Within five or six years, he had made a big sum of *yen*. He sent back enough of that money to remodel our house, and buy rice fields and a lot of farmland.

When my father returned from Hawaii for the first time, he gathered all the children together. My mother said, "Father, you should have returned only after calling the children over to Hawaii."

Father said, "That's right, yeah? I didn't realize you felt that way. If the children want to go, that would be better."

But at that time, children couldn't enter Hawaii unless their parents called them over. So my father again went to Hawaii because my mother had urged him to do so for the sake of the children. One of my elder brothers, whom my father had summoned while he was still in Hawaii, helped him return there. Then, my father sent for my second-eldest brother and myself, and again lived and endured things in Lahaina.

When my father sent for me, I quit school. I was hoping he would send for me ever since he'd returned to Hawaii. At that time, there was only primary school in Sashiki—Sashiki Elementary School. It didn't have a seventh grade. We didn't use the Okinawan dialect; we used standard Japanese as much as we possibly could. The teachers were good; we appreciated them, as they taught us kindly. We had to have moral education from the beginning to graduation. In that course, we studied the cultivation of moral and ethical character. Everything I studied in that course stayed in my mind.

I also liked penmanship with large and small characters. I kept up with my classmates in penmanship, but the English alphabet! I don't remember what I studied, only what I was taught through books. Complicated matters were not in my head. In school, there was also karate, calisthenics, and athletic and gymnastic exercises. But, there were no intricate games such as American football!

But at that time, with no money coming in from any other place, I knew that my father was making a lot of money in Hawaii and remitting it to us in Okinawa. I knew this for a fact. So I planned to come to Hawaii, stay at least two or three—at most four or five—years, save money by working hard and persevering, and return to Okinawa.

I left Okinawa in 1915, with my second-eldest brother, when I was 17. I still wore Japanese kimono, and I carried my things—nothing particularly fine—in a willow trunk and a sea bag. We went first to Kobe, where we had physical (eye and hookworm) examinations which we passed okay. Since my father's return to Hawaii we were in good circumstances; we owned property in Okinawa. We didn't have to worry about boat fare. But we had to wait

for the transportation—the ship—because at that time there were no airplanes!

The *Panama-maru* was a small wooden ship, not a regular passenger ship. She couldn't carry a lot of people, so passengers were determined by lottery. But I used to be unlucky at drawing lots. I drew a blank and ended up staying in Kobe for three or four months. I left Okinawa in August and departed from Yokohama in December. I stayed a while in a Kobe inn, not because of any illness, but just because I was unlucky at drawing lots!

With the inn's clerk, I used to welcome guests from Okinawa. I would also go out for fun with that clerk; we would go to strange and far places, like Osaka or Tokyo, to sight-see. I didn't need to worry about money because my parents remitted more and more to me. They told me not to worry. But I really didn't suffer; I was just playing around. I got so used to it, nothing troubled me there. My father and brother in Hawaii thought I had returned to Okinawa! We laughed a whole lot after they found out what had actually happened to me.

It was such a small boat, the *Panama-maru.* Dirty—almost indescribably so. We slept in a big room, side by side on the floor. We didn't have good food. Moreover, no one ate well because of sea sickness. We all suffered quite a bit. We were all strangers. We tried gathering together in a friendly way and talked, but we couldn't enjoy the conversation because everyone suffered from sea sickness. We just didn't talk a lot about Hawaii on the *Panama-maru.*

It took 16 days to get from Yokohama to Hawaii. We arrived at Honolulu exactly on New Year's Day—on the first day of January, 1916. But the immigration office didn't allow us to land that day. We anchored off the coast overnight until the second, when at last we landed. My eldest brother came to welcome me at the immigration office. After the official check, we passed through without any difficulties and got out of there.

I remember riding a horse-drawn wagon from the immigration office to the hotel. I had no special feelings about Honolulu. Coming from Okinawa, it didn't seem like too bad a place. I had cousins in Honolulu, so I visited their homes. But I didn't stay long. My brother and I headed out to Lahaina as soon as we could.

I don't know how much the fare was, but the boat was small and rolled around too much. It wasn't easy to take. Then the pier wasn't as good as today, and the waves were so rough that we couldn't tie up at the pier. So we had to jump to the pier from the boat. My brother and others helped me carry the baggage, and we finally landed in Lahaina without anyone getting injured.

At that time, all the camps in Lahaina had names: Pump Camp, Kiawe Camp, Mill Camp, Left—or Hidari—Camp. We lived in a camp called Lanipoko, near the seashore. There are no houses there now, only pine trees. It is mostly sand. Sanitation was better there than at other camps, but the public toilet was unspeakably dirty.

For a long time we lived in a dilapidated house—a crude house sup-

ported by walls. We slept on the floor. When the waves were rough, they came under the floor and moved upward. But the floor was high enough, and the seawater never damaged the house. In fact, the wet sand made the ground firm. Even a rainy day was enough to firm up the ground and settle the dust. The house was crude, but we were not inconvenienced.

In those days, the ordinary pay was 77 cents a day. But I was exceptionally small—and young too—so my wage was cut in half. For 37 cents, working 10 hours a day, I planted sugarcane, watered, pulled weeds, and trimmed the dead leaves off the cane to make it grow faster. After coming home, I cut firewood. Then I went to our vegetable garden at the edge of the sugarcane field. I planted squash, cucumber, and green onions. We never had to worry about buying vegetables. I also made a *furo* (bath) for our family to use, a place where we could bathe privately. And I kept the place clean.

Our kitchen was also outside the house. We made a fireplace there surrounded by zinc sheets. My elder brother had a wife, and she did the cooking and other household chores. At first, we never bought any expensive food. I must say that we made a side dish which was a mixture of *kuruma-fu* (wheel-shaped gluten wafers) and the squash we'd raised in our yard. And once in a while, it was nice to have *aku* (bonito).

We could buy *aku* at three or five cents a pound, sometimes a whole *aku* for 10 to 20 cents. Whenever a lot of *aku* were caught, the market wanted to sell them as quickly as possible, at reduced prices. It was a good deal. So my father would buy plenty and make *katsuo-bushi* (dried bonito). He never bought other fish. And he didn't waste anything—head and other pieces. Even the bones were used to make soup. Such frugality! He never bought meat. Never. And we had our garden.

It was a small garden, true; but we grew more than we could eat. We could send the surplus to the store. The big store—the plantation store in Lahaina town—was where we bought all our necessities. We bought on credit, using our *bangō* (plantation ID number). A Mr. Gushiyama was the salesman there for three years. He was a Japanese. Since we were all Japanese we didn't feel inconvenienced.

Nothing unusual happened between the Okinawans and the *Naichi* (Japanese from the main islands of Japan) all the time I was in Lahaina, though it was said that some years ago they often fought because they were on bad terms with each other. But since we arrived, being quiet and willing to endure, there was no fighting. Even the *lunas* (foremen)—they were mainly Portuguese at the time—were not so harsh. According to stories we had heard, they had been terrible in the beginning. But there was a kind water *luna* called Frank who was good to us, so it really helped.

Still, as my father had said, it was not easy to save money by day work, even though we—my father, my elder brothers and myself—all gathered together and worked hard at one place. So we decided to *kompang,* contract to grow sugarcane. It was 20-some acres for three years, a good deal at that time because the market was brisk: during boom times, sugar prices go up. Our

whole family—wives included—raised sugarcane on contract. And whenever someone had spare time, he went to work at some other place for day pay. That way, we got money from two places.

We got a total amount or over 2,000 *kompang* dollars from contracting. When we went to the office to receive our pay, even the company praised us. "Whole family together worked in a body," they said. "Only you all have worked like that." We felt good because the whole family had worked together. And besides, because we didn't have any outside expenses, we were able to save every penny of those *kompang* dollars.

At that time gold was the only currency; those gold coins were so heavy! My wife says that if we had kept some of those gold coins until now, we'd be rich. But it was out of the question then. We three brothers, the three eldest sons—younger brother came later—knew that our mother had been waiting for father all this time in Okinawa. So, with the money we had made from the *kompang,* we were able to send him home to her that much sooner.

Now. I have an interesting story to tell.

When I first came over, the officials in Kobe entered the name "Choki" in my passport as my personal name, instead of Chokame, my real name. When my younger brother came over, he was also entered under "Choki" instead of his real name, Choteru. The Japanese characters for both Choteru and Chokame can be read as "Choki."

In 1922 my wife, Tsuru Gusukuma Hokama, came over with my younger brother's wife, whose name was also Tsuru. And they were both the same age—18. They each had become "Tsuru Hokama" after being recorded as our legal wives in our village register. They were both, then, "Tsuru Hokama," in the same spelling in English.

At the immigration office, the head officer said, "How come—wife 'Tsuru Tsuru Hokama,' age the same '18'? How come—husband 'Choki Choki' all?" He made a face.

It was a rather strange case with the head officer saying, " 'Tsuru' all. All age same." The case was resolved when an interpreter there, Mr. Tajima, who was Japanese, laughed and explained.

"Neither wrong nor lie," he said. "In Chinese character, the name can be read either 'Choki' or 'Chokame.' The same with 'Choki' or Choteru'." Yes, it was so funny that the *haoles* (Caucasians) laughed and laughed.

Fortunately, my younger brother had come along with me to the office, so there was no trouble at all. Rather, we gave them a good laugh. They recognized it as an unusual case. We didn't have any trouble with names!

(My maiden name was Tsuru Gusukuma. In Hawaii it would be called "Shiroma"—the character is the same, but the pronunciation is different. When I came here as elder brother's wife with his younger brother's wife, I anticipated the confusion over names. At check-in time in Hawaii, we two were called "Tsuru Tsuru," and all the passengers on the boat made fun of us! So I insisted on being called "Gusukuma."

(In Okinawa a girl had to get married when she came close to 18, 19, or 20. My sister, who was four years older than me, was promised to my hus-

band first—by parents on both sides—when she was small. But she married another man. Despite that, his family and my family were still close. My elder brother became his elder sister's husband. Also, his aunt became my uncle's wife. It was she who *shimpai*ed (arranged for marriage) for us. Both families were related to each other and knew each other well.)

In that respect, the marriage was good. I had known my wife when I was still a schoolboy in Okinawa. Fortunately there was only one school, and both villages were nearby. Besides, I knew her elder sister, too—the one who was supposed to be my wife. But that sister didn't want to come to Hawaii, so she married that other man. As a result, Tsuru became my wife!

We held a party after she arrived here. I remember it well. We invited plenty of acquaintances. We didn't have a ceremony, but I had prepared a wedding ring for her before she arrived here. It was pure gold, and she later lost it. She lost number-one-most-valuable thing!

(I suppose I lost it in the sand after a baby was born! It would be more valuable today than it was then!

(I remember that, at first, I couldn't sleep in Lahaina because of the sound of the waves hitting the shore. But gradually I became accustomed to it. It was like a lullaby, and I came to sleep well and rise early to that sound.

(I remember buying *udon* (noodles) and *shake tin* (canned salmon) at the plantation store there. A one-pound can of salmon cost 15 cents, which was cheap even at that time. Now, it is very expensive. There is no such size (one pound), and the meat is rather pale. In those old cans, the meat was so red and beautiful. It was delicious just looking at it! Adding some green onions made it even more so!)

Yes, since the time my wife arrived, most Japanese things could be found at that store in Lahaina.

Lahaina was at the edge of the sea, and the town was rather clean; but it was too hot for me. That place gave me a nosebleed. I'd get nosebleeds often, and they wouldn't stop. I was afraid that it might be bad for my health. I'd heard that Lanai was cooler; so in 1926, I came here for the first time, to check on conditions.

I came on the small boat that used to carry employees of the company back and forth from Lanai to Lahaina twice a week. Since it was company (Dole Company) transportation, it was free. Everyone used it regularly. My younger brother was already living here at the time. He was here to welcome me when I came over.

Younger brother worked as a yardboy for the big *luna,* Mr. Tanigawa, a Japanese boss. After he introduced me, he talked to Mr. Tanigawa, who said, "Oh, if he's your elder brother, anytime all right. All right, it's okay." I went back at once to Lahaina to fetch my family. I started to work in the beginning of the month of New Year's, 1927, in Lanai.

In those days, there were very few big pine trees. There was a group of very big trees near the ranch, but most of the many trees that are here today were planted since we moved here. In fact, I dug some of the holes for them. Other than that, the landscape was rather dreary—nothing for sightseers.

But we had come here with pleasure, because day work was two dollars for 10 hours in the pineapple fields. In Lahaina, day work in the sugarcane plantation was one dollar for the same amount of time.

After we'd lived here for a while, however, we found out that it rained almost every day. In the wintertime, it was cold and there was no work. Because of this, we were in a spot. It was not too hot in Lanai—it was too cold! But the weather changed from year to year, and I gained varied experiences from work, like a "versatile actor."

At first, I did any kind of work that was available. Ordinary work like *hō hana,* cutting grass. I also picked pineapple; we would take them out from the lines and lay them in boxes. We even had to load them by hand onto trucks. Everything was done by hand. Now, ever since machinery was adopted, few human hands are necessary.

In those days, there were no labor-saving machines. In the field, we used mules to plow and do other kinds of work. Today, in order to plow the fields, we use tractors. These huge Caterpillars. They can do everything—dig up roots and everything—everywhere.

And nowadays, we pick the top or crown of the pineapple for planting. In the past, we mainly planted cut slips, which was okay. But the pineapples didn't grow evenly. The plants were of different sizes—large and small—and the fruit appeared at different times. If the crown is planted, the plants bear fruit at the same time without growing as high. Because of this difference, the planting method has been changed to using the tops.

I also did "side feeding" work when it was first started. We would dilute the amount of ammonia by half, put over 10 *kin* (1 *kin* = 1.32 lb.) of the mixture in a pump, and, carrying it on one side, apply fully. If the ammonia is applied too high on the plant, the leaves fade. So, we had to apply it two or three times—lifting up the leaves, applying downward, downward. Carrying a load on the shoulders, feeling waist pain, I worked. It was very hard work. But in those days, pineapple work meant mostly carrying. Under the *luna*'s supervision I also carried insecticide on my shoulders and controlled the spray with my hand.

The *lunas* in those days were foremen of groups which, during the season, averaged 40 or 50 people. During the off-season, these groups decreased to 14, 15, or 20 people. Laborers whom the company had to hire were coming to work. It was an awkward situation. That was when the *kōkua luna* (assistant foreman) position was added to each group.

Mr. Asato, an Okinawan, was our *luna.* He used his influence to get a contract to build a yard fence because day work was not always available. As it rained almost every day, the group I was in had to dry the fence boards. As soon as the sun came out, the wet boards had to be exposed to the sun, and other boards had to be cut.

Corner posts were four-by-four, and the stringers were two-by-four; the hole for the post was about three feet deep. I was like a carpenter's helper. I worked on the process of digging holes, dying the one-by-three boards in brown stain, and nailing. The whole camp used to be surrounded by the

yard fence we built. Since we got the yard fence contract, many more houses were built. And from the building of the yard fence, I made some money—basically $4.50 a day. Day work in the pineapple fields was less than half that, so I preferred taking contract business, even the hard work.

There were many groups that competed against each other. However, for my group to become number one, every one of us workers had to cooperate well.

Planting is just such a group effort. The pay is calculated according to so-many thousands of slips planted. An inspector from the company would come together with the contract bosses of the groups and they would count the number of slips planted. Payment was determined by that number. After we received the total amount, we divided it evenly among the members of the group. Pay came out to $5.00—sometimes—$5.50—per day depending on the contract and how well we did.

For some time I helped Mr. Asato, who couldn't write or understand English very well. When he brought back the contract payment, it often took us all night to figure out how much would go to each person, because it was such a large amount.

Still, I was more of a helper than a real assistant. I had studied English at night school for some months when I lived in Lahaina, but it hadn't helped me much. My teacher was a *haole,* and whenever he spoke, I couldn't understand. We students were young—always trying for a laugh—and rather inattentive to our studies. I quit without persevering. It proved I had no brains, I think. It is easy to learn ABC.

No, I was simply a helper. I helped a person who was unable to do something by himself. Later, however, I was able to contract for clerking. I weighed sulphate of ammonia and made an average of four dollars to five dollars a day.

I also made money by digging holes for the planting of pine trees. One *puka* (hole)—two feet deep—was 25 cents by contract. The many pine trees you see here today are less than half as many as in the old days. They grew too thick so they were cut down.

They were planted, in the first place, because without trees, there are no rains. Because of this, Mr. Brown—who was plantation manager when we first came—promoted the planting of trees, out of necessity. He also said that there ought to be trees here in any event.

(But Mr. Brown didn't allow us to plant just any kind of tree. Pear trees were prohibited. And even when we planted papaya trees, he had them cut down.)

It was because he thought pineapples would be damaged by insects and germs whenever rotten fruit fell near them.

(He was very meticulous. We planted sweet potatoes in a small space at the very edge of the camp. . .)

The sweet potatoes were already growing when an inspector for the company came and pulled them all out, saying, "No plant." They weren't even close to the field.

Mr. Brown was too meticulous as a manager. He wanted everything to be clean because he suffered from tuberculosis. There was not a single matchstick to be found on the main road—even cigarette butts were picked up. By company order, the area was divided into so many blocks. Those in charge checked each block. The whole area was wonderfully clean.

Mr. Brown had the only car in Lanai at that time—a poor-looking Ford—but he rarely went out. And even when he did go walking through, most people didn't even recognize him.

(I knew him only through a picture. We were not treated so harshly, but we couldn't dry wet clothes just any place—only in the regular drying place designated by the company. I heard that someone was badly scolded once for drying a child's wet *futon* (bedding) on the porch.)

That person who got scolded was rather careless, even when he was in the field. In the summertime—when it's cold in the early mornings—many workers come to work wearing jackets, which they take off as the day gets hotter. This guy, he took off his jacket and laid it on the pineapple leaves. The manager came by, saw it, and said angrily, "Who said, 'Okay'? We will fine you if you do it again!"

Whenever such a matter was disputed, the manager forced the offender to get out. He cancelled his *bangō* and fired him. Even for such a small matter. It was like the saying, "Where might is master, justice is servant." There was no trouble if we worked honestly and quietly.

After Mr. Brown, there were many other managers: Mr. Fraser, Mr. Aldridge, then Mr. Cleghorn. There was also a Mr. Shrader. He was manager of Dole-Fil in the Philippines. The company had a plantation in the Philippines and he'd gone there as manager. Then he came back and became a manager in Lanai.

I don't remember other names. There were others but, I am terribly forgetful! The present boss is a good man. He is a democratic person. He exchanges words with everybody—very down-to-earth. And he wears an aloha shirt! He is an interesting man.

Looking back over the years, I have noticed many changes. At present, there is even a chemical that can ripen pineapples all at once. You can't pick them all at once, however. You must plan to pick them in this section a month earlier and in that section a month later. There are also many machines for irrigation.

As there isn't much rain in Lanai, we had to irrigate; otherwise the pineapples would die. We had to dig wells to get enough water. Fortunately, there is much water in Lanai—once you dig a well, you can irrigate all the time. You never have to worry about water shortages. We have good water, for which we are grateful.

When my *luna,* Mr. Asato, moved out, he urged me to take his post. "You are capable," he said. I rejected it at once.

Then Mr. Tanigawa, the head boss at that time, said, "Mr. Hokama—you are capable; better take that post."

I replied, "No, I know nothing at all. I neither speak nor write English. How can I be a *luna?*"

"Yes. You are able to do it." He had confidence in me. Finally he said, "The salary is $45 per month."

Forty-five dollars per month is not enough to take care of my children," I answered. I knew that despite the hard work involved in contract work, I could make four to five dollars a day at other work.

Again I rejected it. "Being a *luna* wouldn't be suitable for me. I don't mind hard work in the field. I am able to do it."

Nevertheless, Mr. Tanigawa insisted. "It is at first a little money. I am unable to give much money as *luna*'s share. But it is going up every year gradually. Besides, it has a chance of getting better. Go ahead!"

After that, it couldn't be helped. I became a *luna* in 1934.

I had a lot of trouble speaking and writing in English. Fortunately, my pidgin English was understandable among Hawaiians, Portuguese, Filipinos and Japanese. And I was lucky because I had tried so many different kinds of work during my first three years here. It gave me a lot of experience from which I could teach people to do things efficiently. Because of this, the workers trusted my ability and did good work, following my orders faithfully. And the company praised us for our good work and favored us. "So-far-so-good." I didn't have troubles, even though I was illiterate!

I don't mean to be boastful but, as a foreman, not a moment were we destitute. We never had to tighten our food budget, and I could always bring in enough money to clothe my children nicely.

(I had eight children in the first 13 years of our marriage. I'd studied sewing in Japan and, for a couple of months, here. I left the children at home to study sewing. Except for their Sunday clothes—which were made by outsiders—I sewed all their everyday clothes, even pants and panties.

(Later, when my daughters became eighth- and ninth-graders, they became fussy about styles and fashions, so we started to sew together. Their clothes were nothing to be ashamed of—all their friends envied them—but, if you compare with what children nowadays can get, I feel sorry for the children. We couldn't give them much. Still, my children would say that we were much better off than their friends.

(They never had to spend much money. My husband trimmed the boys' hair. I cut my girls' hair. Of course, I cut the boys' too.)

It was a period of depression when I became a *luna.* Prosperity had declined into depression. During the Great Depression everyone had a hard time.

We took out all the pineapple one season and threw them into the rows to rot in the sun. The daily pay was cut down. Workers were unable to complain since the company had a big loss too. It couldn't be helped.

The company declared that they would fire us if we complained about reduced wages. It couldn't be helped. We had to bear it.

In those days, a party of bosses would come out to work in the morn-

ings. All the bosses gathered together and worked at unaccustomed places in the pineapple field because of no other fieldwork. We also did other work—cleaning up the inside of the camp.

It was possible to live on a reduced income if we lived in thrift. We had to be careful about expenses, as we had many children.

(Sometimes I only paid part of the charge balance at the store.)

It was an extremely distressing time.

Since no one had enough money, we Okinawans set up a *tanomoshi* (mutual finance association) to help each other out. I had joined just such an association in Lahaina—in 1920. I had been able to save some money by putting aside little by little each month. Unfortunately, the head of our *tanomoshi* here became insolvent, and it fell apart. Also, some of the others said that they couldn't keep up the payments with such small incomes. In that situation, I lost everything I had put in.

It was all Okinawans in that *tanomoshi.* However, we did have the Nipponjin Kai also—the Japanese Association—to which both Okinawans and *Naichi* belonged. It acted as an agent for the Japanese Consulate. It really handled everything—school matters, everything—related to the Japanese. This association was discontinued during the war, and we have never had any association like it since that time.

We Okinawans still get together, but for different reasons. We get together in the Social Hall for special gatherings. We meet three times a year: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, and for all the Okinawan New Year parties. We used to go on picnics in April; but the company always gets busy in April, so we don't go in April anymore.

We had the Okinawan *bon* (Lantern Festival) dance at one time, too. There were young folks, like Goro Hokama and Choyu Yara, who used to beat the drums and dance. They were really good. Everybody had a joyous time. It was called the Okinawan *bon* dance. Even white people and Filipinos joined us and danced, all excited. It didn't last very long, though, perhaps two years.

In the past, there were many Okinawans in business here. A Mr. Mashi Ikehara had a swine-raising business. Before we came, there was a photo studio here run by people from Sashiki-*mura.* But they didn't last long, perhaps five years. They didn't make money. There was and still is Mr. Richard Tamashiro who owns Richard's Shopping Center, a bowling alley and movie theater. There was the Oshiro family who still run a service station.

When World War II began in 1941, I as a Japanese felt very uneasy, since it was a war between America and Japan. I remember the blackout time—here in Lanai. We closed all the windows and made sure there was no light leaking through. The watchman would come around, and if he ever noticed any light coming through, we would be summoned and scolded.

That was not all. Those who acted strangely were called in by the military authorities. Teachers, association officers, schoolteachers, temple priests—even church ministers—were summoned.

At that time, there were two Japanese schoolteachers—two male teachers—from Japan, the principal—Mr. Nakamura, and Mrs. Takeshita. There was Okamoto Store's boss too.

(There was a priest, too—Kochi-*sensei.* We shared the laundry facilities with them. We used to do the laundry together and talk.)

There was a Christian minister named Sakai—he was summoned too. He gave them good answers from the beginning.

He said, "I have no American citizenship. I am a Japanese, but my children are all American citizens. None of us have ever done any misdeeds. You have no grounds to accuse me. We have done nothing wrong."

Then they said, "You are working as a messenger for the Japanese Consulate." They had found out about it.

(When a child was born, we had to record the birth in our village registers in Japan. There was nobody from the Consulate here to do it for us, so Mr. Sakai had taken on the responsibility.)

He said, "I do it because they asked me to do it—that's all. I have no evil intentions. I am not involved in the Consulate any further than that."

Then they said, "Is that all?"

Nevertheless, he was sent to Honolulu. But he was soon released, because he gave them good answers.

There was also Sunjo Hasegawa. He was a *luna* at the camp. He was under the camp boss. He was a very capable man—fluent in English. He spoke such beautiful English even white people remarked that they had never met anyone who spoke such pure English. But he was sent to Honolulu, too.

In those days, I was not a person of much consequence, but I was a Japanese school treasurer. My duties included depositing the school money in the bank and paying out the salaries. Because I was involved with the school I was summoned by the authorities. I was quite concerned. I thought I would be thrown into misfortune. I took the day off and went to the Court House in the morning, quite worried.

(In the beginning, I didn't know what would become of us. But, since we had done nothing wrong, I told myself that it wouldn't turn out to be anything serious.)

I knew I hadn't done anything wrong. But, since I was a Japanese, I was worried. Mr. Shiroma, a yardman for Mr. Fraser, told the authorities that they shouldn't bother with me. He said, "Oh, Hokama—he will do no harm. Don't worry about him."

But I was quite concerned. There were many people who were called in before me and interrogated. They had been asked anything and everything, they told me. And you couldn't possibly tell the authorities lies, as they had already investigated you thoroughly before summoning you.

Listening to these people, I was quite worried. I couldn't predict what I would be asked. In the interrogation room they listened to me, then said, "Oh, on a certain day, this thing happened—do you tell us lies?" They even went so far as to ask me which I preferred—Japan or America.

They asked me how much money I had; whether I had money in the bank—if so, which bank, a local bank or a bank in Japan. They interrogated me in detail. Yes, everything they asked me. And I answered them all frankly. Since I was a poor man, these questions didn't bother me.

Afterwards I was kept at the Court House until the end—all were gone and still no one called me. Then this Maui Japanese senator appeared and a policeman, who had noticed me waiting, asked him, "How come this man is still here? He has been here for quite a while."

"Oh yes," the senator said. He told me, "You don't have to go there. Come this way instead." He took me to the police station in the Court House office. He said, "Oh, you are Hokama. We know all about you."

"Yes. I am Hokama," I said.

Then he began questioning me. He tried to see my reactions. He had already found out everything; he had heard about me from the manager.

I answered his questions frankly. I told him that I had never been in trouble. The only thing was that I was a treasurer at a Japanese school. But I didn't keep that position to hurt anybody. I had no guilty conscience.

"Of course," he said. After a while he added, "You may go home now. I am sorry to make you worry."

I felt like I was reborn, and I ran home rejoicing.

When I got home, I met Mr. Shiroma. He said to me, "Mr. Hokama—you were summoned, but there will be nothing more to worry about. You can stay here in Lanai."

During the war we dug air raid shelters, everybody did that. At our house, too—under the orange tree we dug an air raid shelter. It was for all of us to hide in when airplanes came!

(Every household had one. We would squeeze together and crawl around!)

There weren't too many soldiers here at the time—just a few, four or five of them. We made friends with them. As they had nothing to do, the soldiers used to watch us fishing and chat with us. They became our friends.

Our own kids—they volunteered of their own will. Those kids—we had no way to stop them. There were some from Lanai who were with the 100th Battalion—Tamashiro and two or three more. Some joined the 442nd. Like my nephew—the second son of my wife's brother—who lived next door.

The company was busy then, because they had lost many employees. In a way, we were short of labor on Lanai. But what worried us most was the fate of these youngsters at the battlefronts.

Quite fortunately, my nephew was sent to the cold places—Italy and Germany. His feet became numb, but that was all. He did not fall victim to any other illness. At the end he came home safely, and we were all very happy about that.

After the war, there was a fund-raising effort to aid Okinawa. Mokichi Yahiku of Honolulu—who happened to be my wife's cousin and my best friend—learned that Okinawa was going through extreme hardship and misery after the war. He and many others came to me and asked me to help.

I couldn't do much, but I thought I should really try to assist them in any way I could. So I immediately went over to discuss it with Mr. Oshiro—the father of the same Oshiro that runs a service station here today. He was a smart man and he had had education. He and I helped Yahiku.

We collected monetary donations from everybody. It was a hard job. There were some who abused us, like those Filipinos who spoke ill of me, straight to my face. They had become American citizens after the war, and they acted big. But we tried to pay no attention to them; all we did was work diligently. We went around, and the result was quite good. We raised a lot of money here in Lanai and sent it to Yahiku in Honolulu. He in turn sent milk cows to Okinawa.

Gembi Tonaki's wife was a head nurse at Kuakini Hospital in Honolulu at that time. She was from Sashiki, and it was to her that a later petition for help first came.

There had been a landslide in Sashiki. It was caused by the cannon shots that had been fired into this one hill during the war. Rain also was responsible for the loosening of the ground. Many in the village perished.

When Gembi's wife contacted us, we collected monetary donations and sent them to Okinawa immediately. I was very happy when—in 1961—I visited Sashiki and the people there thanked me, saying it had been a big help to them.

I had been to Okinawa one more time before that—in March of 1940. My younger sister was sick then, and she had written me saying that she missed all her brothers in Hawaii and that she badly wanted to see me. I went to Okinawa immediately. I got my sister clothing and went at once.

Okinawa was already suffering a lot—it was beyond description. They couldn't eat. Rice was scarce. In restaurants they would serve you noodles, that's all, nothing else. No matter how rich you were, you couldn't eat. Even if you were a sugar grower, you couldn't keep any sugar for yourself nor dispose of it freely. You had to report every sale you made to the authorities. When I observed these miserable conditions, I felt lucky I had come to Hawaii.

It was March when I went there, and I came back in June. When my sister recovered from her illness, she showed me around. During that time I observed every corner of Okinawa. And everywhere was in such pitiful condition, that I didn't want to stay long.

Then I met an old friend of mine from Honolulu. He had worked as a yardman for a white man. He had saved his money, come back to Okinawa, and opened a small store. He had been living quite comfortably, I thought.

When I met him I said, "You did the right thing. You came back early, and now you have a fine store. And—as you are smart—you are even a village councilman."

But he said, "No, no. You must sympathize with me. You are not fully aware of what's happening here." It turned out that he was envious of me.

"The truth is that it is unbearable," he said. He advised me that I

should leave for Hawaii, which was a paradise. He must have known vaguely that Japan was going into a war with America.

I didn't know anything about it until his wife called on me at my place and said, "Mr. Hokama—the war has already begun. You must not go back to Hawaii."

It was indeed the first time I had been informed of the war, and I couldn't believe what she was saying. I said, "Should a war be started, how could I escape to Okinawa, leaving my wife in Hawaii?"

"That's true," she said, "but it is too dangerous to go back."

"It is because it is dangerous that I'll dare to go back to Hawaii," I said. I left shortly afterward for Yokohama.

Very shortly, everything the Japanese possessed was frozen—travellers were no exception. I took one boat ahead of the others. I was lucky. Thank God, I am grateful. If I hadn't been there in 1940, my sister might have been dead in the war. And I wouldn't have been able to meet my wife's family either—father, mother, sister and grandfather—all were there then. Grandfather was still healthy in 1940.

I met every one—all my relatives, including my cousins. When they told me of the miserable conditions in Okinawa, when I saw how much they were suffering, I was glad that I had come to Hawaii. If I hadn't had a chance to come to Hawaii in 1916, if I was still living in Okinawa, I might have been drafted and killed.

When I returned to Hawaii, everything I saw here seemed extravagant.

(Yes. He said that all the time. Whatever he saw, he would say, "What a waste!")

I was still a *luna* after the war. In 1946, when the union (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union) was formed, everybody began watching us very closely—from every angle. We had to be careful. We Japanese foremen were closely watched by others.

In 1947 there was a big strike. Some workers threw a foreman into the water and the people picketed and blocked the roads. They picketed around the office and laid themselves in the entrance of the main hall. We couldn't go to the meetings! We *luna*s belonged to management, and we couldn't become union members. That made things even harder for us. Those workers resented us.

We were worried. However, as we never acted bossy but, instead, always worked together with them, we had no trouble with them.

There was a *luna* whose house was picketed, and he couldn't get in and out of his house. But nobody came to my house. There was nothing to worry about. If we had remained calm, honest and modest, there would have been no strike or trouble.

I can't blame the union for using violence because it was the company that had done a lot of misdeeds. The company wouldn't raise wages—even though they could afford to. As we were fully aware of these facts, we couldn't possibly tell the union members what to do.

It is hard to point out: "This is no good," or "That is no good." I

can't speak ill of the union because the company has done many evils. On the other hand, because the union was formed, the company started to use machines. The company started using machines because it must make a profit. So I can't speak ill of the company, either.

In the olden times, people used to carry fertilizer and insecticides on their backs, but ever since machines replaced man, we've used trucks with booms that stretch out on both sides. With trucks and booms, acres can be sprayed and fertilized cheaper and faster. Even the placing of mulch paper is done by machines now. In the olden times, all these things were done by human hands. But planting is still done by hand. Experimental planting machines are still not adequate.

Laborers are still needed. But when wages rise, the company tries to reduce the labor force. They wouldn't profit much if they hired more people. Then the union gets angry, accusing the company of reducing the labor force; they start striking and wages are raised. Then when wages rise, the company again tries to reduce the labor force.

The union and the company have always contradicted each other. They are enemies. They've had strikes. I can't blame them.

(There was a strike in 1951 that must have lasted close to three months. I recall all the pineapples rotted and the plants were stunted for lack of water.)

During that strike, we *luna*s were all sent to Wahiawa plantation which was under the same management. We were assigned to supervise the work there, but the company also wanted us to observe how the work was done there. They sent us to Honolulu first. We had a good time. We were housed in a fine hotel in Waikiki. When we got up in the morning, the company car was at the door, waiting for us.

We drove to Wahiawa plantation, drove all around, and watched the people at work. The big bosses assembled and told us how they worked in their pineapple fields in Wahiawa. They told us that things were not looking up. Even the Wahiawa manager asked us to do our best so things would get better.

The strike was still on when we came home. As time went on, the strike was resolved. They reached some agreement but we were still in the same awkward position.

Before the union was formed, the company provided us many things free, like housing, water, and the doctor's services. When the union was formed, these things were no longer free. But our wages went up. And the company could no longer fire us easily, the way they used to. With that kind of feeling in mind, we were in an awkward position. We never criticized the union by saying they were no good, yet as a *luna,* I couldn't join the union.

When the union boss of Honolulu came to Lanai on behalf of Dela Cruz, Lanai's union boss, he questioned all of us and watched us at work. I was open. I had nothing to conceal so I didn't worry. I acted frankly.

Quite fortunately, Dela Cruz had known me—he had once been a foreman in the fields. He knew how I handled the workers. He understood my

feelings. So he told this union boss what kind of *luna* boss I was. He stated that I was an honest man, that I had never abused the union. That I was diligent; that I would cause no troubles.

That's why there were absolutely no problems. That's why I worked until retirement.

I retired in 1961—one year before my full retirement. My position was a responsible one, which gave me a lot of headaches. Furthermore, my health hadn't been good ever since I developed an ulcer. I had to bring medicine to the fields, carrying it with me all day. I had to take it three times a day.

My friends told me that I had only one year to go, that it would make a big difference, and that I would get only 80 percent of the full social security benefits if I retired before 65. I retired anyway. My health just didn't permit me to keep my job any longer. I retired.

I want to live a long life—if possible! Our children have been doing well. My grandchildren, too, are all very smart. I have no worries, as my children are all doing well. I am in want of nothing now. Although I've never been able to make a fortune, I am grateful. I have only to watch my children grow.

UCHINANCHU
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